

The Men Who Loved the Dead:

An Examination of
Death, Loss and
Memory in History
and Culture

By

C. Augustine

Zem Books

The Men Who Loved the Dead:

An Examination of Romantic Necrophilia in History and
Culture

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ISBN: 978-1-71685-804-8

Imprint: Lulu.com

Published by Zem Books.

Online Store: [http:// www.lulu.com/zem66](http://www.lulu.com/zem66)

Like us on Facebook: www.lulu.com/zembooks

Email: zemrocksme99@gmail.com

Acknowledgements

All things considered, most will not want their names associated with such a book. Ironically, though, legally, one cannot defame the dead. Suffice it to say, this book is dedicated to friends and comrades, loved ones and beautiful women who have gone on before. Also, to what I presume is the memory of Jon Titchenal, the co-author of my first book, who has vanished, and I am assuming is now dead.

"Stay for me there: I will not fail
To meet thee in that hollow vale."

Henry King, Bishop of Chichester
Exequy on his Wife (1624)

The "House of Beauty"!

In today's world, those who wish to grasp at a fleeting fantasy or chance of reanimation, after succumbing to terminal illness, can choose (if they have the financial wherewithl) to have their body criogenically frozen; in hope that, at some future date, when science will have been able to cure whatever disease it was that killed them, they can be "reanimated," as in H.P. Lovecraft's classic story, to be rejoined to what will be, to them a brave, if puzzling and troubling, future world.

At least, so goes the theory.

In ancient times, before the advent of technological wizardry, the dead, if they were of a superior caste, or people of rank and privilege, were turned into the famous mummies, using a process thought to preserve the body for its voyage into the after life. The funerary practices could be elaborate, if the right amount of wealth was present, featuring mud-caked mourners cavorting through the town, beating their chests in mock fury at the seeming carpriciousness of life and Death.

Anubis, one imagines (the jackal-headed goddess of Death), went before them. At least in spirit.

A reenactment of the ritual "killing of the god"

Osiris, who was dismembered by his jealous, evil brother Set before his "resurrection" and rebirth as a Divinity by consort Isis, the mother of hawk-headed Horus, was a central piece of religious theater. (Horus is Aleister Crowley's "Divine Child" of the New Aeon, incidentally.)

The mouth of a mummified corpse was opened by a priest, so that it could speak out in its defense. The body was thought to be an immaculate statue of itself, pictured to be so; an elaborate tomb, for the very wealthy and important, was thus prepared. Food and drink, toys and games, clothing, jewelry and other accoutrements were left sealed inside, for the event of the dead man or woman's "resurrection." The Egyptian tablets comprising the famous "Book of the Dead" leave a detailed account of what a spirit will face during its final sojourn.

The mummification process is famous, and involved removing the brain with a hooked rod, removing of the vital organs: the liver, stomach, heart, and large and small intestines. These were then sealed into canopic jars, put into a miniature casket, and entombed with the deceased (whose corpse had been dried with the soil of Wadi Natrun). The body of the deceased, herbs and special spices sewn within it, was thus preserved eternally by the mysterious art of the ancient Egyptian morticians.

The deceased, their *Ka*, or, immortal, divine selfhood (i.e. "soul") would thus be called before the throne of Osiris, wherein their heart would be weighed against the "Feather of Ma'at," to see which was heavier. (The author is not altogether

sure how one lost this particular contest, or what the consequences were if one lost. I believe the *Book of the Dead* suggests being torn apart by an ape-like demon. Alternately, one supposes banishment to some sort of eternal Hell as the most likely prize.)

The place wherein the embalming and mummification process took place was referred to as "The House of Beauty."

If a man died through an attack or criminal misdeed, his body was treated with the utmost care. If the wife of an important man, a famous gent or powerful, celebrated figure died, she was left undisturbed for a number of days. As her body was now overripe and crawling with vermin, it would be unappealing to embalmers; who, otherwise taken with the beauty and fame of such a woman, might be tempted to violate the cadaver.

"House of beauty," indeed.

--Anonymous

Torn Rose

Like a torn rose,
They found my love,
Her form was a joy to behold;
She'll never complain, she's always restrained,
She'll definitely never grow old.

I have my memories, a lock of her hair,
And I have her pretty red smile;

I'll take her right out, and dance her about,
And lock her back up for awhile.

If love is a prison, she's my captive indeed,
I'll never relinquish my hold;
I'll keep her in chains in the back of my brain,
Though her skin is so damnably cold.

And never and never doubt the power of love,
Though a rose become tattered and old;
Though she's battered and worn, tattered and
torn,
And so damnably icy to hold.

(1999)

"Last night, I dreamed I was holding the
withered bones of an estranged relative in my
arms, she being wound in her shroud. My mother,
sitting in a chair with rotted mouth, begged me,
'Do not hold her thus!', but I lie with her
regardless, hearing her murmur, though she were
dead.

Getting up, after the act of love, I put a cloth
across her face.

"Angels see thee to thy rest."

"I had drained the life from this one; for, years
ago, she had drained the life from me. I had loved
her unto death."

--Anonymous

It is midnight. Before dawn they will find me
and take me to a black cell where I shall languish

interminably, while insatiable desires gnaw at my vitals and wither up my heart, till at last I become one with the dead that I love.

My seat is the foetid hollow of an aged grave; my desk is the back of a fallen tombstone worn smooth by devastating centuries; my only light is that of the stars and a thin-edged moon, yet I can see as clearly as though it were mid-day. Around me on every side, sepulchral sentinels guarding unkempt graves, the tilting, decrepit headstones lie half hidden in masses of nauseous, rotting vegetation. Above the rest, silhouetted against the livid sky, an august monument lifts its austere, tapering spire like the spectral chieftain of a lemurian horde. The air is heavy with the noxious odors of fungi and the scent of damp, mouldy earth, but to me it is the aroma of Elysium. It is still--terrifyingly still--with a silence whose very profundity bespeaks the solemn and the hideous. Could I choose my habitation it would be in the heart of some such city of putrefying flesh and crumbling bones; for their nearness sends ecstatic thrills through my soul, causing the stagnant blood to race through my veins and my torpid heart to pound with delirious joy--for the presence of death is life to me!

--C.M. Eddy Jr. and H.P. Lovecraft, "The Loved Dead" (1924)

"Promises to the dead are sacred, and must be kept."

--Count von Cosel

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Author's Note:

I remember in the late Nineties or early Two-Thousands, coming across an Internet 1.0 page featuring a collection of macabre *memento mori*-type photos and postmortem pics; some authentic, a few, such as that of the plastic-shrouded Laura Palmer from the old television show "Twin Peaks," obviously staged. The author of the page extolled the virtues of a world of "necro brothels," in which pederasts and other psychotics could indulge sadistic and illegal fantasies on inert, unfeeling, decaying dead. Society would be spared the fallout from the hideous crimes committed by such individuals, who, presumably, would have their sadistic and repellent needs sated. And thus would everyone benefit, by the author's logic.

THIS author does NOT, in point of fact, condone ANY activity that is illegal or ethically harmful. What follows is a rumination, a meditation, an essay on death, memory, fantasy and grief. Be advised: This book is NOT for the squeamish, nor the easily disturbed.

Preface

In Haiti they have a special relationship to the dead. The *bokor*, or sorcerer, may have recourse to make of a man a *zombi*, or one of the living dead. It is said a special zombification powder is blown onto the man, and then he dies.

He is buried, only to be resurrected by the *bokor* and his slaves, to be lead outside his home, where the mourning for him is still going on. This way, he knows that he is dead, and must serve the *bokor* as one of his undead slaves. Sometimes this is done for revenge purposes; more often than not, it is for purely economic reasons, so that the zombi, much as in the legendary Hollywood pic *White Zombie*, starring Bela Lugosi (who made the popular image of Dracula iconic), can work the plantation in much the same way as his living African cousins kept as slaves in the American South before the Civil War.

Accounts of men thought to have been buried, then found walking about as the risen dead, are endemic to Haiti. However, one story, of the sort that will chiefly concern us as the thematic content of this small volume, has a woman named Camille, and her husband Matthieu Toussell. This tale is recounted by occult writer William Seabrook. We can recount it here, in our own way.

The Wedding Dinner

"Come my dear. I'm going to give you an anniversary feast beyond any you had ever dreamed possible. I will invite some very special guests. And then, you will dance."

The bride, Camille, was delighted beyond all reason. Carefully, she prepared her bridal gown, as per her husband's instructions; she likewise prepared her hair carefully in the mirror, and was careful to scent herself with the most expensive perfume. Finally, the clock struck just after

midnight, and her husband, a dapper man in formal evening attire and a top hat, appeared.

"Come quickly my darling!" the man said, his voice slightly strained. "The carriage is waiting."

He reached out his long, skinny hand, adorned with his wedding band. She noticed how frightfully long he had allowed his nails to grow; but, fearing his anger, she said nothing of it. She took his hand, allowed him to lead her outside.

There was a warm rain falling lightly as they ascended the carriage, the hooves clattering against the rough, cobbled street, the empty, slum quarters where their house stood, as if a lonely sentinel against the surrounding poverty and gloom.

The streets were curiously empty tonight. Deserted. A solitary man stood on the street corner, alone, possibly drunk. He seemed to fade into the shadow around him as they passed.

"I feel eyes on me tonight!" Camille said, turning toward Matthieu.

"Nonsense!" said her husband, dismissively. "Soon, we will be at the place wherein you will have your anniversary feast. You are so beautiful my darling, so beautiful. After dinner, you will dance with our guests. Their eyes will all fall upon you, but they will burn with the same desire as mine. But they will burn with vain desire, for you are mine!"

How strange Matthieu seemed tonight, thought Camille. The coach rattled and clattered to a building down a dark, deserted street. The coachman, a mysterious figure wrapped up to his

face in black, helped them disembark.

Camille followed her husband to the gate, where he took out a set of rattling keys that clacked together like little bones. The gate swung open with a rusty creak, and she followed her strange man down a garden path and to the stone steps leading up to the front door. She wondered if perhaps this was not an abandoned church.

He rattled the keys, inserting one in the rattling lock, and throwing the creaking door wide.

It was not a church, but it did, thought Camille, seems as if the place were abandoned. The smell of must and mould was thick here, and, there was another smell...unpleasant, but, also, mixed in with the scent of what she thought must be an abundance of food.

Glittering candles barely illuminated the pristine white tablecloth, the silver dishes arrayed in little pools. Dark shapes sat at each end of the table. Four of them.

Inert, they did not get up to greet them.

"Come my dear, enjoy your...wedding feast." Matthieu put out his hand, as if to motion his wife to the table.

She crept forward cautiously. The four strange guests, she noted--they were not moving. They seemed to sit motionless, as if in rapt attention, waiting for something. Lo, one of them seemed to be clutching the stem of a fallen wine goblet. Why did he not right the glass? she wondered.

She grabbed one of the guttering candles from the table, and held it to the face of the

seated man.

Her mouth worked in silence for a moment.

She realized, with the feeling of icy fingers raked across her spine, that the face she was staring into was that...of a dead man.

She moved the candle about. All of the seated guests, she realized instantly, were cadavers.

She dropped the candle, ran from the place, screaming. Behind her, the laughter of her husband echoed in the midnight stillness of the house.

Into the night she ran. But she had lost her mind.

She was confined to an asylum by her family. Very few believed her wild ravings about Matthieu, the "corpse-collector." But, they went back to the scene anyway.

Inside, they found everything laid out as she had described. But Matthieu, and his retinue of keepsake corpses, were never seen again.

Charming story, no?

Another brief anecdote, just to set the mood or "tone" of the piece that follows, is a true-life account, taken from the book "Funeral Customs" by Bertram Puckel, published in 1926. In it, the author relates (quoting "Evelyn the diarist"):

Supped at Sir William Petty's, famous for having brought back to life a poor wench who had been hanged for felony, her body having been begged as the custom is, for the anatomy lectures; he

had her 'put to lie with a warm woman'
(surely some credit is due to the warm
woman), and with spirits and other
means restored her to life.

He further relates:

A full account of this exploit was
published at the time in a pamphlet
entitled, "News from the Dead, or a
true and exact relation of the
miraculous deliverance of Anne Greene,
who having been executed December
14th, 1650, afterwards revived and by
the care of a certain physician, is now
perfectly recovered.

Anne, poor Anne, got her second shot at
life. One wonders, though, even in 1650, just what
the hell you had to do to get someone, maybe your
maid, to sleep next to a cadaver? And what,
exactly, were these "other means" to which he
resorted? something with that living woman of
"warmth," lying next to Anne Greene? The most
sordid and black pits of the imagination, comic-
grotesque as they are, might be plumbed.

However, neither of these tales, though the
scene they set, are exactly the sorts of death tales
and ghastly ruminations that we will be exploring
in the pages of this book. They are simply an
appetizer.

What follows then is the main course.
Bon appetit!

Introduction

Once, when I was a young boy, a thing I saw on television effected me very deeply. If you were a very sensitive or socially-concerned person, you might say that it scarred me for life. Made me the person I have become; or at least, partly.

I came home from an extended afternoon of play and turned on the television to a new program called "Ripley's Believe It or Not!"; It was hosted by a craggy-looking, scary television actor named Jack Palance. He introduced each reenacted segment in an ominous, eerie voice I can't soon forget.

One segment focused on a bizarre ritual. The ritual involved a number of people (I got the impression, as young as I was, that the thing took place long, long ago) stepping forward to kiss the hand of a woman seated in a chair, adorned in what I took to be a robe and crown-like affair.

The camera pulled back to reveal that the seated woman was a grinning, ghoulish *death's head*, a skeleton. She was a dead thing, exhumed from her grave, clothed and sat up so that people could be, presumably, forced to come forward and kiss her skeletal finger.

(Note: A similar account is given, on an episode of Ripley's, about the legendary Spanish general "El Cid", who, after death, was sat upon his horse and sent into battle, wherein he lead his terrified troops in a victory against the Moslem invaders in 1099.)

I was, amazingly enough, not horrified. I was fascinated; enraptured really, the program transported me to another world, opened a new window into another, more sinister reality I could only, as of yet, have guessed at through vague circumstances and hints, dreams and portents that came to me too young to consciously remember or understand.

Do men love the dead?

I must have wondered. It would be decades before I would explore the possibilities behind such a love in my novel *Buried*, which I based upon the sordid history of Otto Carl Tanzler. Here, I surmised that death could be the final act in an evolutionary chain; that the living body could be a cocoon for the soul, and that, when released, the dead become something else, utterly separated from us as much as connected to our humanity.

Ghastly films like *Faces of Death* would, several years later, grow to fascinate me. They would feed my appetite for the morbid, for the ghoulish and darker aspects of existence, bring a feeling which was a mixture of haunted beauty and grave rapture. I was hooked; as a child, a horror miscreant.

But "death is no dream," to quote a popular jazz tune from long ago. Around me, year after year, relatives and friends began to pass, some from age, some from suicide, one even from murder. I wondered at this strange state of death, this ominous final chapter of life which waited, perched precariously like a vulture on a hanging, craggy cliff, and which, no matter how often one

pushed the thought away with the ephemera of cultural distraction and workaday reality, could visit one on the road. In the shower. In a public place. Even, as it were, in the middle of one's sleep.

Now I lay me down to sleep...

My first funeral took place in a mortuary down the street from grandma's house. My grandmother took me, and the woman laid out in the casket was a complete stranger to me, an old woman from another era, another time.

I didn't understand. I couldn't comprehend. Here, then, was Death, a first glimpse for a boy that would go on to do more than his fair share of obsessing over it.

It is puzzling that some men cannot, as it were, let go of the object of their adoration, but must pursue it to the grave, and even beyond.

We do not mean, in this simple monograph, to relate the exhaustive history of every obscure psychopath with a "taste for corpses"(as one notorious necrophile was quoted as telling the judge at his trial). Our little book is not, really, a fixation on Messuers Bundy, Dahmer, or Lucas, since we have written about such men before, and we do not find an especial fillip of true love in their obsessions. They seem to have been motivated by their own callow need for control, instead of a true fixation upon the sepulchral angels that beckon other, truer necrophiles. Perhaps we are wrong in this, but it is our decision.

We are, instead, merely going to relate the

histories of certain men whose rare deeds, vile and bizarre as they were, truly marked them as being special even amongst the teeming ranks of deviants. For whatever reason, these men hold a special place in the pantheon of our fixations, forever bringing us back to the more unsavory speculations as to how they developed their own personal tendency to “love the dead.” No deep-seated inadequacy could account for it, surely.

"When a human being dies, he becomes something else." --
Sserewu, cannibal killer.

The dead are another race. Another order of being. Spiritualists claim to be in contact with them, albeit in their disincorporated essence. Does this traffic with the departed also amount to a necrotic romance, an amorous affiliation with the atrophied?

There are those who fetishize the ceremonies of the grave, who bring to appalling life the pale lustre of the departed—as they envision them to be in their heated imaginings. An entire industry of gothic chic romanticizes death, and movies and television programs, particularly those having to do with the fictional form of the vampire (who, initially, was never a suave romantic, but a bloodsucking freak that stank abominably of the charnel house) have done incredibly well, traditionally.

There is something about the crossing over, the shuffling off of the mortal coil, the possibility

of the mutated, hungry form left behind (in the words of one anonymous author, "...The living was food for the dead!") that entrances any who dare leave a lingering eye over the phantom forms of their former friends, and fellow men.

Consider: a necropolis, a "city of the dead."
(So many bone yards reeling upward to the pale grey sky!)

At a local cemetery, a massive family tomb rests on a hill, accessible by a steep little drive past benches and resting spots for weary visitors. The place could almost be a palatial mansion for the decomposed, a stone edifice erected for the final, equalizing sleep that can unite even warring factions of a large clan together, for eternity.

This necro-elegance overlooks a grave yard where other, more dismal stones sink into the earth like marble bugs, their weathered surfaces worn away until, finally, nothing can be ascertained as to who rests beneath them, of whom they once signified. Lost, perhaps, to the elements, to time, their identity could only be captured by a medium, by a witch. Or by God Himself.

Some of them were infants. Cholera and mysterious illness took them out of the harsh, bright, and undeniably cruel world before they even had a chance to toddle. Others were profligates, wastrels, sinners of every stripe—suicides, murderers, the worst sorts of scoundrels.

Still others were unremarkable.

I have walked the dips and rises, these

craggy lanes of the local necropolis, and felt the eerie calm sink into my bones. It is at this particular bone yard, I suppose, I will one day be dispatched, as per my instructions. It is reasonably close to the neighborhoods where I grew up, where all my grandparents once lived, where I first saw that television program that so impressed me.

Death comes. And we “cross over.”

But, what of those who cannot let go?

Beneath the streets of Palermo, Sicily, lie the Capuchin Catacombs, a grim, forbidding stretch of medieval tunnels beneath a monastery. Protected for centuries and watched over by the brothers of the holy order, these tunnels contain the earthly remains of prominent citizens who died hundreds of years ago. Their mummified remains, still resplendent in medieval finery, stare grotesquely from their niches on the wall, wherein their dessicated husks rest frozen forever, the victims of their own fascination with the animated phenomena of their earthly station.

It is not difficult, passing the monstrous visages of such macabre relics, to see them as the denizens of some alien race, to divest them of the humanity that they so ardently sought to preserve by having themselves interred here. What did they seek? The same preservation the Aegyptian sought with his arcane rituals of mummification? Is the life, then, wrapped up in the body?



"Hallways of the Dead": Two images of the Capuchin Catacombs, Palermo, Sicily.



Perhaps only our own notions of it. It is difficult enough to conceive that one day the sacred breath of life will leave us, we'll fall down, and be forever still.

Instead, to swear off this incalculable horror, we invent tales of the supernatural, pay obeisance to one and many gods, dress our dead in silk finery and send them out in lavish, expensive

funerals when cremation would have been so much more efficient and cost-effective. Why? What seekest we in such pomp and circumstance? Is it the idea that we can preserve a semblance of the life that was, to be carried over into the mystery of the life which is to be?



Lovers living...



Lovers dead. Bonnie and Clyde, 1934.

When famed outlaws Bonnie and Clyde

were unceremoniously dispatched by Texas Rangers, the "death car" was crowded around by spectators eager to steal some trophy, or even dip handkerchiefs into the copious blood. Ditto the James Dean "Death Car," his Porsche Speedster the "L'il Bastard," (which, by the way, was reputedly cursed), which had many pieces twisted and pried from it.

Why? What are people trying to capture?
What is it we want to preserve?

Morticians make a good living repairing the ghastly images of the dearly departed. Yet, these representations are no more real and proper than the lifeless, unappetizing visage of a wax figurine. Yet we say, "Oh, she looks so good! Oh, they've done such a good job on her." What do we hope to preserve? A final, fleeting semblance of what was? We know that the ravages of time only move forward, in one direction. Does the rotten, sepulchral cocoon of the physical remains really mean so much to us?

Perhaps, as fellow animates imprisoned in this gross physical state, all we can hope to cling to in our idea of the continuum of life is what we've always known: the comfortable, the fleshly and mundane world of workaday reality. We grasp at straws to preserve a semblance of normality, of knowingness, raging against what Dylan Thomas called "the dying of the light."

We make our death-masks, preserve lockets of hair, keep urns full of ashes, dandy up our deceased and photograph them and

remember them in video shrines and photographic temples, all vain bubbles doomed to burst. The illusion will not last, time will render everything familiar and sullen and old. Age withers even mighty mountains, taking every rose and rendering it funereal black.

We could begin by considering the case of Victor Ardisson. He is not primarily who we will be concerned with, but he is close enough to our cause to be of interest.

This “Vampire of Muy” we know next to nothing about; his photograph proves him to have been a robust, even corpulent individual with a Baby Huey visage—or perhaps he is an image reminiscent of silent film actor Roscoe “Fatty” Arbuckle, who was himself accused of the rape and murder of the ironically named Virginia RAPPE (name sounds a little like “Rape,” doesn’t it?). As we have stated, there are few facts we can discern about Ardisson, our primary source being capsules of information easily obtainable on the World Wide Internet.

Apparently, he was an undertaker and a corpse-abuser of the first water. He was an admitted necrophile, a man that derived sexual gratification from dead bodies. An interesting aside is that, when thus surrounded by his chosen companions, he admitted (perhaps) speaking to their severed heads, and confessed himself at a loss as to why *they could not answer him*. Suspicion first fell on him due to a rumor of the odd odor emanating from his domicile. When police entered,

they found the dead body of a child Ardisson had endeavored to molest.

The beatific Ardisson thus confirms what the suspicious reader must have already guessed: the overgrown, sadistic pervert hid the heart of a small, imaginative child, an undeveloped sexual ego who, through years of repression and abuse, crafted his own fantasy life, wherein corpses took the place of the human companions he felt alienated from. (What else would you expect from a man freely given to licking the urine of young girls from the toilet seat? Also, he was a semen drinker; primarily his own, we take it.)

After all, the dead cannot reject or sexually frustrate a man based on trivial, petty concerns and social mores. A nude photograph, purporting to be of Ardisson (who was certainly in prison by this time), reveals a large man with an ungainly bulk, but with the same beatific, child-like expression of dreamy, near-mystic psychopathy imprinted on his features.

Ardisson, perhaps because he only victimized dead bodies, was not sentenced to the guillotine, but instead was sentenced to spend the rest of his life, much like Sade, in a French psychiatric institution.

Kraft-Ebing pronounced him a “moral idiot.” These words mirror, almost exactly, the self-pronouncement made by arch-fiend and American serial killer H.H. Holmes about himself. (And, being a man given freely to experimentation, and having no moral qualms or compunctions, it is suspected

Holmes indulged in necrophilia with his own victims from time to time.)

We shall see.

1. The Moonlit Love of Sergeant Bertrand

"I covered it with kisses and pressed it wildly to my heart. All that one could enjoy with a living woman is nothing in comparison with the pleasure I experienced. After I had enjoyed it for about a quarter of an hour, I cut the body up, as usual, and tore out the entrails. Then I buried the cadaver again."—Francois Bertrand

We can only, in the barest possible way, reconstruct for you the scene, as it was constructed for US, in some long-forgotten tome we perused as a young man. But, let us recount the horrible compulsion of Sergeant Bertrand.

The night is dark, the wind rustling through the trees, moaning with longing for another time, another place.

He steps about the moist earth around the river bank, looking toward the farthest shore, examining it by the dim, flickering starlight, the evil, "Winking Eye of God." (Note: This phrase was borrowed from the film adaptation of the play, *Quills*.)

His boat is old, rickety; churned upon the

brackish, evil-smelling river, he wonders if it will even make the crossing. About him, the twin evils of industrialization and civilization rear bleak towers to the cold, crisp sky, wherein Aldebarran looks downward with Betelgeuse over the crawling, hideous, fungal things that constitute animate existence.

Those stars, he thinks, are eternal; as much as the stones of the pavement and the mortar and brick of so many tottering rotten buildings seemed eternal when their age was comparably given, given next to the respective youth of their bedraggled denizens. In the stinking city, the ancient ogres of old towers, rotten tenements and rusted factories, reared their ugliness over a cowed, forlorn, vulgar and shuffling mass.

But, tonight, of all nights, is to be his, and his alone. A night of romance and salvation, delivering up from the mouldering darkness to a supernal, beautiful light, the light of ALL lights...

The corpse-light.

Beyond the still, freezing water, hidden in the shadow of a withering tree, a single, flickering light beckons. The image of a young woman, stolen from the world in the prime of her youth, dances amid the corpse-candle light glowing in phosphorescent wonder, arising from the rotten bowels of so many dessicated husks. Or, so poetry imagines it to be.

He shoves off into the water, his long boots protecting his pant legs from the filthy, reeking tarn, until he has time, as it were, to seat himself in the boat, to grab the oars and row out onto the

lake. His heart hammers in his chest, the blood hisses in his ears, his memories and consciousness begin to grow fuzzy, faded; everything takes on the cryptic significance of an unearthly dream. He fancies time suspends itself, that the minutes slow and stop, that the world is painting his portrait. "Lover in a Boat, Headed Toward the Cemetery," it might be called. Some imaginative, bold artist, perhaps, could produce it.

It is not long before he has indeed, rowed himself to the opposite bank of the river, and, getting out, sloshes through the brackish cold, pushing his boat up until it rests, finally, on dry land. He is confronted, a yard or two in the distance, with a high wall, topped by a gleaming iron gate. But he knows it is child's play to enter such places.

His breath mists in front of him like a ghost, his skin is cold and clammy, but he hardly feels the elements. Instead, he makes his way to the center of the necropolis, to the hanging arches of a tree, wherein he fancies he can hear a voice, see a light, burning.

"The flickering flame of the corpse-candle," he says to himself. He hefts his pack, a canvas sack containing a spade and a short shovel, and approaches the tottering marble slab. It is cracked by spider-web cracks, broken like the outgrowth of a cracked skull. It gleams dully in the moonlight.

Angelique, it might have said. It might have said *Rebecca*, or *La Voison*, or a surname, or any name. He is not fooled. There is a woman beneath there, a little lover, resting in her sepulchral

cocoon. He will free her, bring her back a semblance of her beauty and worth, capture her true essence and form...in effect, resurrect her, restore her to the fulcrum of youth and vigor, and love...

He feels the electric tingling against his skin, feels the cold earth throb beneath his feet. The earth is muddy and loose; as fastidious as he is, he cannot help becoming filthy at his appointed task. No matter; it now seems as if he is standing outside of himself looking at himself. He is not in the least tired, not in the least disgusted by what he is doing.

Shovel full after shovel full come up, until he is deeper, deeper into the crawling, worm-ridden depths, looking for the top of his little, rotting eggshell.

At last!

It is more arduous work to get the thing open. The noxious funk of the rotting cadaver does nothing to deter him. In fact, he might fancy it the most pungent perfume his nostrils have ever detected. He looks into the features. Remarkable! Even by the light cast from the pale moon, he can see how nicely preserved she is, how undeniable the beauty that HAS NOT been touched by the blemish of decay and the blandishments of putrefaction. He is enraptured. He is, at once, smitten.

Aroused beyond all measure, he reaches in with trembling fingers to claim his brittle prize, hoisting her out of her shroud, out of her casket, and cradling her in arms that love, arms that throb

hot with the vigor of life, arms that hope to share that vitality with this boneyard flower.

Why did he bring her up with him? It isn't, after all, as if he plans to steal her away. Yet, he climbs with her, precariously, to the surface, as if he is going to have a Mad Hatter's tea party.

It is there that he lies with her until, passing into blissful unconsciousness, he falls asleep, cradling his putrefied paramour in his arms.

It is not long after that the light from a policeman's bullseye lantern falls across the sleeping grotesquerie.

The gendarme can not, at first, believe what he is looking at. Accompanied by the sexton, who frantically summoned him when he first detected a mysterious intruder on the premises, he has hurried to the spot, expecting nothing more than a mouldy tramp. At the very least, perhaps a drunken youth.

But this? This, monstrosity? This he has not expected.

The name of the corpse-lover was Sergeant Francois Bertrand.

There is scant information concerning this singular madman, and the preceding narrative owes as much to our memory and imagination as it does reality. A quote from the London Lancet of 1850 (found on an online resource) fleshes out the disquieting appetite that drove Francois Bertrand to enact some of his nefarious, nocturnal activities:

Physiological pathologists have of late been as much on the alert, in France, concerning the case of a sergeant of the line, as they have been, in this country, concerning Miss Nottidge. The two cases bear, however, no analogy to each other. Religious monomania is not rare; but the derangement of mind, leading to the frightful and disgusting acts of Sergeant Bertrand, is, as far as we can remember, perfectly unique in the annals of mental alienation. His mania consisted in exhuming the dead, and taking pleasure in mutilating the corpses; but, shocking to relate, there was an erotic tendency mixed up with these horrible deeds, and he took especial delight in raising the corpses of females, and satisfying his unnatural appetites upon their putrefying remains.

From the trial which lately took place in Paris, before a court martial, and from the confession written by himself, we learn that this unfortunate individual is twenty-five years of age. He first studied for the church, but suddenly enlisted, and, by his good conduct, obtained the rank of sergeant.

When young, he was rather of a sullen and melancholy disposition, but nothing positively pointing to derangement was then observed. His hideous propensities appears only in February, 1847, when they were excited by the sight of a grave left unfilled after interment, the diggers having been compelled to desist by a heavy shower of rain. He then struck the corpse, which he had exhumed with the tools left by the grave, with the utmost fury; and being interrupted, fled to a neighboring wood, where, according to him, he remained for three hours in a state of perfect insensibility, after having been most violently excited.

From this time to the 15th of March, 1849, this wretched man desecrated burying-places eight or ten times, both by day and night, regardless of the severity of the weather, the dangers he was encountering on the part of the keepers, and the difficulties he had to surmount. By the aid of his small sword he used to raise eight or ten corpses in a single night; and he adds that he opened many graves, and refilled them again, with no assistance but his

hands. He had not the courage of telling the whole truth in his written declaration; but he confessed to his medical attendant, M. Marchal, (de Calvi), the most repulsive part of this awful tale—viz., his preference for the remains of females, and his hideous propensity of satisfying sexual desires upon them. He was wounded when getting over the wall of the cemetery of Mont Parnasse, in Paris, brought to the hospital, and thus was unveiled this unheard-of train of disgusting acts.

The court-martial have not taken that view of the case which at first sight would have looked the most rational; and waiving altogether the possibility of monomania having impelled the man to these hideous deeds they looked upon the offence as a misdemeanor, and condemned him to one year's imprisonment.

Different opinions have been given in the medical journals as to which of the two kinds of mania exhibited was the first in existence—viz., the destructive, or the erotic. M. Marchal, the sergeant's medical attendant, thinks the destructive prevailed: but M. Michea, a well-

known mental pathologist, maintains that the second was, on the contrary, the strongest and only mania. The various circumstances mentioned by each of these gentlemen, to strengthen their respective positions, merely rest on the prisoner's own declaration; so that it would appear that no very strong case can be made on either side. Indeed, the whole series of these shocking occurrences might well be called in question, as it seems that no direct and conclusive evidence has been brought forward besides the man's own account. But assuming the latter as true, the existence of monomania can hardly be doubted, when we consider that a natural instinct was entirely set aside, that there was not the slightest prospect of gain, that the wish of visiting churchyards returned almost periodically, that the dangers incurred were entirely disregarded, that none of the vices which generally accompany depravity were present &c. There was, besides, a melancholy disposition, a total insensibility to the agency of physical agents, (such as cold, rain, &c.,) during the paroxysm, and the extraordinary

amount of muscular and nervous energy in the accomplishment of the acts, &c. All these considerations would tend to prove that this man was irresistibly impelled to such unheard of abominations.

This disgusting case recalls at once that form of mental aberration which reigned so extensively, about a century and a half ago, in the north of Europe, and known under the name of vampirism. It will be recollected that vampires were suffering under a sort of nocturnal delirium, which was often extended to the waking hours, during which they believed that certain dead persons were rising from their graves to come and draw their blood; hence arose a desire for revenge, and burial-places were disgracefully desecrated. Bertrand's case seems the very reverse of this; for we here see, not the dead rising to torment the living, but a man disturbing the peace of cemeteries in the most horrible manner imaginable.

It is clear that the casual reader of this article is to feel no pity for the maniacal Sergeant,

whose “disgusting” appetites are expected to appall the reader, who in no wise is expected to be perusing this particular publication due to a desire for titillation and sensationalistic thrills.

It is instructive to note that the author here relates Bertrand’s particular psychological malady to a sort of reverse vampirism, a desire to desecrate the graves of the dead in order to stave off—

What, precisely? The author does not say, but elaborates upon the specifics of vampiric mania as it relates to the self-preservation of the body, a desire to stave off the consumptive effects of the supernaturally animated corpse, whose unresting presence is believed to be draining the life blood from relatives and friends.

Sergeant Bertrand is no vampire-hunter, of course, but a man whose desecration of the graves of his putrescent paramours is inspired not by fear—but by a mad love, a love that can never be satisfied, because the object of said love exists only in the psychic space of the lover.

After all, what is a dead body but rotten, fibrous material; decaying flesh, food for maggots and worms, flesh that will shortly dissolve to bones, and one day which will become nothing more than dust? Is there a desire to preserve, in the necrophiliac Sergeant Bertrand, some semblance of the imaginative life of a woman, some fantasy of a woman that cannot be fulfilled by the genuine, living and breathing article, but whose dream-like guise must be foisted upon the death’s-head visage of the cadaver? Is he simply

playing at dollies with life-size flesh?

He cannot connect, in any meaningful way, with his fellow men. Or, at least, we can surmise this from his activities. Despite whatever facade of congeniality or projections of sociability and refinement he might be able to project, he is, internally, as void and cold and stench-ridden as one of his deepest, dankest crypts. Inside, it is a bitter, barren, lonely place, a place of rejection and hunger.

2. Sergeant Bertrand Mutilated His Corpses.

Arising “several a night” (a feat that would have made Burke and Hare green with envy), the besotted maniac, in much the same fashion as the corpulent, sadistic Victor Ardisson, admitted to slashing his dead victims. In fact, the evidence is that he performed quite extensive mutilations on any number of resurrected corpses.

To what end? Did he not love them? Did he resent them for being dead? For being so ugly? For being so beautiful? For smelling so badly? For smelling so sweetly? Was it the idea of having the image of a woman so completely under his power and control? Had he, hitherto, been rejected of women? Was this his revenge? His cure for sexual impotence?

Of course, he may have been mutilating to take with him a trophy. Serial killers, such as Jack

the Ripper, are wont to take with them a prize or fetish from their slayings, a “ginny bit of kidney,” or “clip the ladies ears next job I do, just for jolly. Wouldn’t you?”

Bertrand may have wanted pieces of flesh for perceived supernatural properties. His thinking must have been magical at this point: caught like a spider in the increasing web of his madness, even the article states that he was damn near insensible to inclement weather or the conditions of the environment, that he worked doggedly to exhume his various trophies and bring them, like grotesque treasures, upward, to be bathed in the light of the moon, to be baptized in night. Their noxious reek did not affect him; or else, gave him an extra fillip of pleasure as he cradled, lovingly, the decayed flesh, the dessicated bones, the worm-eaten wombs.

3. (S)He Made Love to These (Wo)men

A modern necrophile, Karen Greenlee, who was arrested and charged in an obscure case in the 1980’s in (where else?) California, was quoted as saying: “I’m a morgue rat. This is my rat hole, perhaps my tomb.”

Karen Greenlee confessed an early attraction to death. Detailing her sordid history, she confessed that the funeral industry was rife with necrophiles, with corpse-abusers, with fellows

like the one she describes in Adam Parfrey's quintessential underground anthology *Apocalypse Culture* as looking "like Larry from the Three Stooges."

(A chilling description to be sure.)

Karen was drummed from the funeral industry after her necrophiliac inclinations were discovered. She found herself attracted to young gay men, the sort that, in the 1980's, were disproportionately affected by the rampaging AIDS epidemic, which was just coming into fruition at the time; she found herself plagued by an attraction she could scarcely understand. Living in an apartment filled with her artwork and "Satanic images" (what else?), she strikes the reader as a woman who, perhaps out of a feeling of being threatened by living men, chose for herself a number of cadaveric fantasy objects, finally culminating in the mad theft of hearse and body that secured her punishment and exposure.

Karen describes breaking into mortuaries in an attempt to secure the sort of "quiet time" she needed to pursue her particular paraphilia.

A sense of titillating, forbidden thrills, of indulging taboo urges, must have driven her onward. One can envision a young woman in skinny jeans and a t-shirt, not conventionally attractive, creeping through the hallways of the funeral parlor, eager to press the cold, decaying flesh of a handsome young decedent between her thin, trembling fingers; planting kisses upon the waxen, blue lips, holding the stiff white flesh and caressing it.

Attracted by all the ceremonies of the grave, all the ceremonial trappings of death; her muse and passion was death—a picture of her being grasped by a shrouded Reaper is a personal drawing reprinted in *Apocalypse Culture*.

Another “Lady Necrophile” is the less-infamous Leilah Wendell, an avant garde artist immersed in the “gothic” subculture that celebrates death and vampirism. From her New Orleans “Museum of Necromantic Art” (it is now closed), Wendell held sway over a miniature kingdom that included visual art and sculpture, publishing, and an impressive collection of items devoted to necromancy. She also offered a bed and breakfast.

The distinctly unappealing visage of Wendell looks out from a coffin in a photo reprinted in the sequel to *Apocalypse Culture*. Here, she confesses a lifelong spiritual mentoring in the supernatural personage of Azrael, the “Death Angel” foretold in the Bible.

We have not read her literature to any great degree, so cannot make informed opinions on her work. She seems to be a Satanist (what else?), but would probably blanch at describing herself in those terms.

4. The Secret of Elena’s Tomb?

Count Carl Von Cosel Tanzler (Or Carl Tanzler Von Cosel. Or Carl Von Cosel. Or Carl Tanzler—all depending on which version of his

name seems most reliably accurate), was a German immigrant who had spent time, after the war, in a displaced persons internment camp—a brutal place where the ugliness of existence must have impressed itself upon his consciousness quite deeply. We can rest assured he saw death at a reasonably young age, became quite accustomed to its distinctively putrid look and smell, and dispensed with his squeamishness in the face of it. It was here, perhaps, where the demon entered in.

We cannot be certain.

He must have married after WW1, taking a large, seemingly unlovely wife that held little appeal for him. She bore him two daughters, one of whom died of diphtheria.

(A researcher has suggested it may have been this that lead to the eventual dissolution of the short-lived marriage.)

Von Cosel is next found in Holland (he is still married at this point), and finds, to his seeming delight, that his long-lost mother is still alive. He proceeds to care for the elderly lady, perhaps driving another wedge between himself and his wife. At some point in these confusing, early post-WW1 years, Von Cosel embarked on tours of various foreign ports in Australia and South America, developing an interest in electrical equipment and various hair-brained “scientific experiments.”

Cut to the chase.

Tanzler lands in the United States, a new immigrant with a specialization in radiology and a small, distant family he has dragged with him

across the ocean. Although the timeline of his life, up to this point, has become somewhat muddled (as least as far as we're concerned) one thing is for certain: he eventually abandons his unwanted family, heading for the remote, small-island oasis of Key West, Florida.

It is here that he goes to work as a radiologist. Attached to the hospital, the tuberculosis ward treats cases of what, at one time, was referred to as "consumption," and was (at least in remote New England villages and hamlets) attributed in the past to "vampires," or vampiric relatives who had preceded one in death. (This will be discussed in additional detail later.)

Von Cosel has, up to this point, delved steadily into an ever-widening pool of madness. Or perhaps revelation. His dreams are frequented by images of the "Contessa Constantine," an imagined distant relative who appears, ghost-like, to haunt him with images of his "one true love" (keep this in mind).

It is while employed as a radiologist that he meets the one supreme fixation of his life, a Cuban immigrant suffering from tuberculosis (she reportedly contracted this disease while working at her father's cigar factory), a woman named Elena Milagra de Hoyos. Von Cosel realizes that the much-younger woman is the very image of the "One True Love" shown to him by the mysterious dream-wraith Contessa.

(We should stop to note the bizarre, striking beauty of Elena De Hoyos, the persistent fascination of two photographic images we have

seen while she was still an incorporated entity.

One, a rather nice but thoroughly pedestrian image of a young woman might, conceivably, have been taken twenty years later. In it, Elena is standing outside in a white shirt, a weirdly modern-looking hairstyle and an altogether out-of-date ensemble; suggesting an Elena that, had the circumstances of her life been different, could have even conceivably been envisioned as a Hollywood ingenue of maybe the early Forties. At any rate, she gives the impression of being much prettier than the average young lady; of having, within her, something *more*, something special; something Von Cosel idealized.

The other photo is darker, more frightening. A Roaring Twenties portrait of a young woman staring, with a kind of hard beauty and a chin that might be described, somewhat, as determined; the effect of this photo is stark, chilling; it blows a little dark smoke at the consciousness of the viewer, giving us an uglier, more sordid, and undeniably LATE young lady, a streetcar vixen from another time, a tough girl from the "wrong side of the tracks," one trying to disguise a certain hardness of character beneath layers of lace and makeup and other finery. (But this could all be the illusion we, ourselves, have built around the fantasy of our words; what we want the picture to convey.)

He is instantly smitten, and promises the young woman, through his own experiments in radiological research, that he will be able to cure her of her malady. Her family, while taking a dim

view of Von Cosel as an undeniable old lecher, however remain aloof, hoping against hope that the eccentric old man will, indeed, find some way to treat the seriously-ailing Elena.

Alas, it is not to be. Elena Milagra De Hoyos died October 25th, 1931. Von Cosel is devastated. He is, however, not to be denied the object of his undying love.

He had previously showered the ambivalent Elena with a variety of expensive trinkets and gifts—now, he builds for her a tomb that will rival many of the resting places of the wealthy and privileged. Von Cosel spends countless hours serenading the entombed Elena with his favorite Spanish love songs, seeking in a corpse the tender, romantic companionship that has been denied to him in life.

There is no question as to the mystical, supernatural qualities of what Von Cosel feels to be their great, fated love. After all, have his visions not been adequate in conveying the mysterious, dark beauty which, later, he would meet, full and in the flesh, standing before him, perched forever on the cusp of his great love, yet moving away from him also, into the valley of private sickness and misfortune, into the valley of death? The irony of meeting his eternal paramour and then having her snatched away again by death's cold, clammy, unyielding and undeniably unmerciful grasp must have been maddening for him. One supposes the idea of reincarnation might have been either a comfort or an ironic, cosmic gag to him. Thinking in those terms, he might have felt like the cat chasing his own tail.

5. Elena is Not In It.

It was two years later that, sneaking into the cemetery with nothing more auspicious than a Red Ryder wagon and a bizarre, taboo compulsion even he could not fully understand, Von Cosel took from the lavish tomb he had had constructed (as an aside, one wonders: Where did a radiologist procure the funds for this?) the remains of Maria Elena Milagra De Hoyos, and secreted the reeking, pestiferous object of his obsessive adoration back to his home. There, he put it to the putative marriage bed.

And, of course, he described the smell as being “overpowering.” He was also alarmed at the condition which he found her ears and abdomen in, engorged as they were with ripe maggots. (We are not experts, ourselves, in putrefaction, and can only hazard a dim, grotesque series of suppositions and guesses as to the condition of an interred body after a period of two full years. Suffice it to say: it wasn’t pleasant.)

So began the legendary “reconstruction” of the fast-decaying Elena. Von Cosel, using strips of cloth dipped in parafin, remolded her delicate skin as it oozed away in a torrent of slime. He fitted her with glass eyes, wired the old bones back together as they fell to pieces; painted her, made her lovely and fresh for himself.

He fitted her with a wig, and fitted the marriage bed with a special lip to catch the

overflow of rottenness and putridity as it dripped from the hideous husk. Elena, at least for Von Cosel, Was.

He, of course, spoke and sang to the damned thing as it dripped venomous, vomitous funk onto his mattress. The odor, which was quite noxious and made him conspicuous to his neighbors, he tried to mask with the aid of disinfectants and perfumes. He explained this as being the result of his interminable scientific “experiments.” In truth, he spent a great portion of his day simply fighting away the swarms of flies and pests attracted to the steadily-decaying Elena.

Of course, it was an ideal situation for him, now. The body formerly had belonged to a woman that couldn’t have looked at him as anything more than a kindly, eccentric old man, no matter how many lavish gifts he showered upon her. Now, however, he could possess the image of her, the fantasy-thing that he kept locked away, in his most heated dreams and desires—now she was his, to enshrine and worship, completely and utterly. To make communion with. To have and to hold, in sickness, and in death.

Did he have hopes to resurrect her? We can only surmise he might have. Karen Greenlee, “The Unrepentant Necrophile,” recounts a funeral she presided at, wherein an obscure religious cult gathered around the unembalmed body.

One time this bunch of religious fanatics held a funeral for one of their members. They didn’t want her embalmed, they just wanted her

dressed and in the casket. We usually didn't do that, but we decided to be nice and put her up in the stateroom. We were standing outside of that stateroom and we heard someone saying, 'Rise in the name of Jesus!' They were praying and slapping the body. They were talking in tongues. That was weird!

The author is reminded of a photo, reprinted in the book *Death Scenes*, in which 1940's LAPD detectives are gathered by the dessicated remains of a cadaver a religious cult had hoped, by the power of black magic, I think, to bring back to life.

The rich fantasy life of an unrepentant, confirmed necrophile must be rife with such ideas concerning the ability to bring back life, or at least, some semblance of it, to the dead, through the possession of their flesh and the accoutrements of the grave...their personal effects, their mouldering clothing; what they were buried with. Didn't the ancient Egyptians, after all, bury their dead with food and drink, clothing, gold, lamps, oil, and other important items to smooth their way into the afterlife? Was there not sacred, mystic logic behind the ancient practice of mummification? What was the connection between body and spirit? The fabled "silver cord" of Spiritualism and astral projectors, whose turns out of the body are tied, inexorably, to the body they leave behind?

(And should this body perish in the process? Well...)

At any rate, we know that Von Cosel built

his own ritualistic world around Elena's reconstructed stiff, surrounding the nuptial bed with burning candles, religious ornaments, and playing sad, mournful Spanish songs to her, singing to her far into the night, as the moon poured milk-white loveliness through the sash.

And, piece by rotten piece, Elena came to resemble something from a cheap horror shocker, or a story by Poe. That he could love the hideous, white, false image he created with his own hot and trembling fingers, is any wonder. Should we not take a moment to reflect on Poe's immortal masterpiece Annabelle Lee? Poe, another man haunted by the ghost of a dead nymphet, penned these aching, mystical lines in the early 1800's:

*"And so, all the night-tide, I lie down
by the side
Of my darling- my darling- my life
and my bride,
In the sepulchre there by the sea,
In her tomb by the sounding sea."*

Poe had lost his child-bride (perfectly acceptable in his day and age) at the tender age of fourteen. She fell prey to consumption, a most common occurrence He spent the remainder of his own brief, tragic life haunted by the image of her. Again, it is hard to "disever one's soul from the soul" (to use Poe's delicate versification) of a most heated and passionate object of adoration—one who will certainly return to haunt you in the wee hours of the morning, in the silent embrace of

sleep, in the black-as-oil murk of half-remembered dreams.

Is the appeal of Spiritualism (what, in former ages, would have been termed witchcraft or necromancy) any wonder? People are willing to hand over a tidy fortune for the hope of communicating again with deceased husbands or wives, lovers and paramours...

(They have often been the victims of predatory hustlers, charlatans, and con artists. Still, they have returned, some even knowing inwardly that they have been suckered, but hoping against hope that the illusion will hold, that they will somehow be able to break open the seemingly impenetrable barrier between the world of the living and the other side.)

Von Cosel might have felt he was succeeding in this endeavor, that he was recreating Elena fresh. Perhaps he had managed to steal her from the boney hands of the Reaper, delivering her from the interminable void, to bring her spirit or consciousness to abide with him.

But, of course, such a situation, even though it went on for a total of seven years, cannot, by virtue of the huge and disquieted energy Von Cosel raised from beyond the grave, long endure. There is a Biblical quote about “what’s done in the darkness” eventually being brought before the light of day, exposed to the world. And this is what happened.

It was Elena’s sister who first became suspicious, based entirely on rumors and urban legendry circulating concerning Von Cosel’s strange

sojourns into the tomb he himself had financed (and his curious, sudden absence from it), that lead her to confront him on his front lawn.

Demanding he accompany her to Elena's tomb, and show her her sister's body as proof that it was still there (meaning she already had an inkling that she would not, in point of fact, find her sister's body where it was supposed to be) the woman was adamant and, for some strange reason, Von Cosel, instead of trying to put her off, meekly accepted defeat. He assured her there was no reason to make a trip out to the tomb. He bade her accompany him home, like Dracula welcoming Jonathan Harker into the deathlike stillness of his castle.

As it is Halloween, we should set the scene for dramatic purposes.

The old man goes slowly, bitterly, up the creaking staircase (we aren't at all sure this wasn't a flat, but, as we said, we're here to take dramatic license), the sister following close at his heels, ready to pounce. She sniffs around in the darkness. There is an uncomfortable, sour odor here; the smell, she was once assured, of Von Cosel's many scientific "experiments." She isn't at all sure about that, but she doesn't like the high, reeking odor.

At the top of the stairs the old man stopped, went down the hall until he was lost in shadow and dust. She followed a little less eagerly now, realizing he could, at any rate, do as he liked with her in the privacy of this place; and must have, most certainly, viewed her as a pest or

threat. She was running on adrenaline and instinct. He stopped in front of a door, put one dry, slightly quivering hand on the rattling little knob, produced a key.

The key rattled like dry bones in a skeletal socket. The tumblers clicked. He cracked the opening, looked at her with an inscrutable gaze that seemed, on the whole, as if it belonged to a man looking through her into other realities, into places few human beings ever even imagine exist. He had crossed a sacred barrier, had journeyed into taboo lands, and here he was, to bear witness to their awesome, inescapable truths.

The door swung open. He uttered something she didn't quite catch. Perhaps it was, "I present to you...Elena!"

At first, the sister might have thought of it as some sort of macabre prank. A Halloween trick or treat, perpetrated by a mentally imbalanced adult with a very strange sense of humor. She walked into the dim, stuffy room, which reeked of different varieties of perfumes, and mouldering roses. Was she in a funeral parlor?

Her eyes told her that what she was seeing could not possibly be true. The dim light of candles illuminated a sight so hideous, so surreal as to be almost infernally comic. But, there it lay, a fat, white maggot in a cheap wig. The stench in here is abominable.

She smiled. Her face twisted up into a hard little grimace of shock. She couldn't take her eyes off of the loathsome, cadaverous doll, the painted grotesquerie that lie in the lip of the special bed

that had been constructed for her. Surrounded by rotting flowers and religious objects, the thing looked, for all the world, like a giant porcelain doll. Maybe a department store dummy from Hell.

“You...you sick monster!”

She may have accused him, cursed him, ran from the room screaming...most likely she was retching in utter disgust. Whatever the case, let us imagine the dramatic effects of a sudden quiver in the reconstructed corpse. The scream of the outraged sister sends vibrations through the putrefied form, making it quiver in its own seeping stink, as locks of wig hair fall from its monstrous scalp. Or so the legend has it, (or has a description of it, at any rate).

She was not long in returning with the police. The resultant photographs of the crime scene are stark, simplistic and sickening. The police must have thought they captured a madman from a fairy tale, or been delivered a character from the pages of Poe, or pulp fiction. A true life ogre, or form of sex-deviant they had rarely encountered. Certainly not one who carried the abuse of a corpse to this bizarre, outrageous extent.

Arrested and tried, Von Cosel was fortunate enough to have the charges thrown out. It turned out that the statute of limitations for grave robbing had already expired, leaving the judge no other alternative but to let Von Cosel go.

The man still had some grave concerns.

To wit: he was now a sordid celebrity of sorts, infamous and vilified, the object of derision and disgust, as well as outraged horror.

To some, however, he was just an eccentric paramour who had defied death to steal the one supreme love of his life back from the cold clutches of the grave. Sensationalistic articles appeared in pulp magazines. One fancies the man almost certainly had to go into hiding.

As for Elena, or, rather, for her so-fascinating remains, they were put on display at a local mortuary. Predictably, thousands turned out to get one curious glance at the controversial cadaver, filing past her display (could you imagine such a thing happening in this day and age?), and satisfying perhaps the same inner urge that compels people to slow down and crane their necks at bloody highway accidents.

Elena was then buried...where Von Cosel couldn't get to her. She was buried in an unmarked grave, same cemetery. Her present whereabouts are a matter of extreme secrecy.

As for Von Cosel, the final, drab postscript saw him living under the name Tanzler in an unassuming house, elsewhere. Upon his death, he was found to be in possession of a death mask of Elena De Hoyos. We are under the impression he was cradling it in his arms.

The author must, surely, digress for a few moments to relate the particulars of a strange dream.

When his grandfather died, he had a dream one night, while lying on the couch in the murk of his trailer home, about descending into a dusty basement area. He was being guided, perhaps, by a figure robed in black—he cannot now remember.

Descending into the stifling gloom, choking on the dust, he was bathed, quite suddenly and unexpectedly, in a bizarre yellow light. The entire scene looked warped with age, as if he were watching a film of himself taken fifty years earlier.

(Yellow, in the mind of the author, has always conveyed jaundice, sickness, etc.)

He found in his dream that he was in a sort of charnel house, a dusty, dreadful display area or museum wherein boxes of earth and dessicated bones seemed to be piled up unceremoniously. He gagged a bit on the dust. He didn't want to be here. A figure whom he couldn't quite see urged him forward.

Forward was up a slight few stairs with a curling, iron bannister, much decorated with funereal scrollwork. He went through the door.

Before him, a Yellow Brick road of marble (we might conjecture tombstones although we cannot now be specific about that) stretched into a background that looked like a bad matte painting from the original *Wizard of Oz*. A tall castle loomed in the distance, a place where the Angel of Death dwelt.

This, apparently, was THEIR kingdom.

Aligned on either side of the road were the same rough, dusty pine coffins. In each, a waxen, cadaverous thing, a thing as alien and repellent as a bloodsucking worm, reclined. Alien, most definitely, and becoming more so with each passing moment.

Despite his fear and terror, the boy approached one of the open boxes at the side of

the road. They must have been resting on tall catafalques, because the thing came up to his chest.

He looked down into the casket. His grandfather was lying there, looking, for all the world, like a hideous, slow-decaying thing returned from some cheap B horror picture.

He rose quickly, grabbed out with a hand that seemed swollen and pregnant with the curious state of putrefaction. The author, but a child, awoke with a start, bathed in sweat, physically nauseated.

Death had claimed his grandfather; it had rendered him something...alien, vile; another species, something that could no longer be safely touched or looked upon or loved.

6. All Memory is a Lie

Once, when he was bitterly depressed, this author had a dream wherein he entered what might have been a Victorian sitting room. The furnishings were all high-backed chairs, very delicate and obviously antique. There were a large mantle adorned with photos, below a cold, dark fireplace. The fire, of course, had died; all that remained was burnt ashes without even the ghost of a smouldering ember.

Approaching the small coffee table, he was astounded to see it take on the general shape of a grave marker. It was now a solid slab of cracked marble. He couldn't read the inscription on the

surface; perhaps it was covered by a filmy cloth.

The photos on the mantle, as might be surmised, were Victorian “memento mori,” artifacts from that curious age when it was customary to sit up and pose with the corpses of recently deceased loved ones.

(Examples of this sort of bizarre, archaic practice abound. The images are disturbing, even more so when it is not immediately apparent if the image is, at once, post-mortem or not. The author has personally seen examples wherein the cadaver of a young woman has had eyes painted across her eyelids, has been hoisted outside the casket with ropes; the cadavers of Victorian tots are stood up with racks holding them up clearly visible between the legs. It is ghoulish, unnerving stuff.)



An example of Victorian-era "Memento Mori": Post-mortem photographs taken with the dead, posed as if they were still alive.



A "Memento Mori" photograph of a deceased nun.

The lightning flashes outside the window, the author approaching the lightly blowing drapes. There is a figure behind the filmy curtains, that of a young woman, revealed in a flashbulb silhouette by the strobing light of the infernal thunderstorm outside.

The author approaches the shadowy image.

Folklore suggests the image of a woman is taken by the female demon, the *succubus*, to entice the sleeping man to commit blasphemous sin—at least, if only in his own dreams. Alternately, we could give numerous examples of people whose “night hags” and night terrors included intense feelings of erotic molestation. But this, we fear, is beyond the scope of our present volume.

The author bends to kiss the female image, feeling himself clasped in her cold embrace. A tremendous, serpentine tongue is thrust into his own. Between them, only the silken sash separates them, shrouding the image of the woman (who can still not be clearly seen), and acting as a thin, membranous cloth barrier.

She suddenly gasps with tremendous effort, her face freezing, marbling, turning a hideous, deathly shade. The author recoils in terror, thrusting the obscene thing away from him.

She has sucked the filmy sash down her throat; is, in point of fact, strangling upon it. He is shocked beyond hope of recovery; he has been making love to a walking corpse.

He finds himself running across a great, grey plain, a place of turned-up earth. The earth gives way beneath his feet, as he claws helplessly at the side of what can only be a trench—a mass grave. He is to fall into such a pit (During WW1, such trenches became the final resting place for soldiers who had been killed on the battlefields of France, as well as victims of Nazi genocide who were shot and buried *en masse*. And, as one survivor of a genocidal atrocity recounts, “You

know, not always does a bullet kill someone.” In other words, we may be certain that many of the victims of the latter were still alive when the killers filled in the mass graves. This was a hideous fate obsessed over by Poe and other Victorians, who, in an age before the practice of embalming became commonplace, devised methods bordering on the ridiculous to help assure they were not buried alive. One antique advertisement even portrays a bell and rope device pictured as reaching all the way to the casket. Thus, if a man or woman were to awaken in their own caskets, they had but to ring the bell in general alarm. But one wonders: who would be around to hear?)

And were there rotted arms pulling him down, down, down? He cannot now remember. Recounting this dream, he is reminded of the early scene in Mary Shelley’s death-obsessed gothic (not to say, necrophiliac) masterpiece *Frankenstein*, wherein Victor dreams, soon after bringing his creature to life, that he is wandering the streets of Ingolstadt. There, he sees Elizabeth Levenza walking, as if in the prime of youth. However,

I thought I saw Elisabeth, in the bloom of health, walking the streets of Ingolstadt. Delighted and surprised, I embraced her, but as I imprinted the first kiss on her lips, they became livid with the hue of death; her features appeared to change, and I thought that I held the corpse of my dead mother in my arms; a shroud enveloped her form, and I saw the grave-worms crawling in the folds of the flannel. I started from my sleep with horror...

It should be noted that the author does not recall seeing any grave worms in HIS nightmare. But certainly there must have been one or two crawling through the filmy folds of the female phantasm.

Forgive us. We digress.

What could be the central meaning of this particular nightmare image? Various interpretations are given by various self-styled experts, but we won't speculate on the exact meaning; except, in the case of the author, it seems to suggest someone who was enraptured and seized by the feeling of death, decay, dissolution...being surrounded by the "demons of the dead."

7. Can One Be Swallowed by a Funereal Reality?

Ed Gein certainly Was. We've wrestled a bit with whether or not to include the monstrous stories of individuals like Ed Gein and Dennis Nilsen in our little tome, as they seem to reverse the romanticized reverence for the dead exhibited by true necrophiles such as Bertrand and Von Cosel. After all, the title of this book is "Men Who LOVED the Dead," not "Men Who Viciously Mutilated the Dead and Saved Trophies in Piss-Colored Jars of Formaldehyde" (Jeffrey Dahmer was wont to have severed penises floating in jars. Hardly the act of a

star-crossed romantic).

These particular necrophiliac murderers have been sensationalized and covered by so many writers, in so many ways, that, to include them fully here is to risk being redundant and dull. For, what can we possibly add? We can reprint this piece of fiction, however. It was inspired by a nightmare.

An Ed Gein Movie

—I wonder who the hell thought this stuff up?

—Movie is really stupid.

He turns, flips the dial. It is one of those old-fashioned TV sets, back when dinosaurs walked the streets.

Man is standing there in an old detective outfit. Could be Philip Marlowe. The scene is, apparently, some sort of top floor bedroom in an old house. Could be the Bates Motel. Possibly.

Ed Gein is standing there with the shriveled cadaver of an old woman. Maybe it is Augusta Gein. Maybe it is someone he dug up from Plainfield Cemetery.

Maybe it is just someone who kind of REMINDS him of his mother. (Ed was peculiar that-a-way.)

—Maybe this is his cadaver paramour.

(He once saw an old movie with Roberts Blossoms called *Deranged*. It was the Ed Gein story for sure. Several grotesque scenes included Blossoms feeding gruel to his dying mother, and

opening a grave with a hideously rendered actress playing a cadaver come back to life. But the movie is, ultimately, forgettable.)

He dances with his dead lover, caressing and kissing the rotten flesh, trailing the white, moth-eaten funeral dress behind them as they go, in the heated confines of his psychotic brain, to a place beyond hope and pain and fear.

—You're so beautiful my darling, so...beautiful. You've been gone a long time, but now, you've come back to me. I want to kiss you. Will you let me kiss you?

His withered lips quiver as he places them upon the grinning, rotten teeth. Empty, black pits stare into his own; unseeing, unfeeling, except in his tortured imaginings, where this scene is something from a romantic feature, a love story born in the bone yard. Right now he is a man a hundred feet tall; now, he has mastered the two great mysteries of creation: LOVE and DEATH.

The detective is unsure of what to do. Every instinct in his body tells him to shoot, to end it all quickly. Such an individual does not deserve to live. Nothing good could be born of this outrage to nature. His finger freezes, though, upon the trigger. The little ghoul is lost in his fantasy, overcome with his sad, mystifying emotion; a prisoner of the necrophile's heartache.

From somewhere, the old, warped record warbles a forgotten tune, cutting through the ticking stillness of the house; the ghost of a forgotten song.

—I know that you love me, damn you. Say it!
Tell me! I want to hear it from your own lips.
Please, I'll be sweet. I'll be good. Mother always
said I was an angel at heart.

Bare minutes tick by, but, to the detective,
they seem like hours. He suddenly hears a
pounding at the door below, feels a great weight
lifted off his shoulders. He can hear the police call
out below; soon the decision will be taken from his
hands.

He knew he might forever regret not
shooting this deviant.

For the sake of his own soul.

—He would have been doing the world a
favor.

—Police! Open up!

It seemed like only a click later that the
door was busted in. He could hear footsteps upon
the stairs. He knew it was all over. The Ghoul was
still cradling his sepulchral sweetheart in his mad,
hopeless embrace. Drool was sliding down his chin,
hanging in a glimmering streamer from his liver lips
to the wide, psychotic grin of the rotted husk he
imagined he had, somehow, reanimated.

—Sympathetic magic.

He whispered to himself. He put his gun
back in the waistcoat of his pants. What sounded
like a herd of shod elephants was pounding up the
stairs.

The bedroom door blew in with a simple
kick. Wood splintered and cracked. Candles tipped
over. Baumgartner bent forward to stamp them
out. The old place would go up pretty quick, like a

tinderbox.

The electricity came on.

An army of cops swarmed in.

Loverman responded in slow motion, suddenly coming to the realization that there was even anyone else in the room. He had long ago forgotten about Baumgartner, whom he had only viewed as an annoyance. But the legion of policemen would NOT let him be.

There was almost a brief pause before he was wrestled to the floor, with a solid thump on the creaking old boards, and his corpse bride flew out of his arms and crawled into a darkened corner. But no one saw this but himself.

—Darling! Don't leave me.

He put out a thrusting arm. It was quickly grabbed and pulled behind him, locked and subdued.

He could see her cower in terror, see the warm flesh melt away in the darkness, until she sucked up and shriveled and lost all semblance of life. Now, what lay sprawled in hideous mockery in the darkened corner was nothing more than the death shell of some departed beauty, withered and worm eaten and decayed.

—Like they'd bring that many cops, he thought. He twisted in his seat. It was getting late. But he didn't want to miss the ending.

Two cops, one a plainclothesman, so tough, the other a rookie uniform cop. Both are bent over at one of those miniature refrigerators. He knew what must be inside. Jeffrey Dahmer stuff.

The plainclothesman opens the refrigerator

with a sort of knowing smirk. Maybe he's been through this routine before?

—Probably not.

Whatever was inside --maybe it was human heads. Maybe it was a jar full of human vulvas. A heart in a sauce pan. He didn't know. But the uniform cop recoiled in horror. He put his hand over his convulsing mouth.

Streamers of vomit rushed out from between his fingers. We imagine the color was deep red; bloody.

Close-up: something on the floor that could be vomit, could be a clot of gore.

We can perhaps be forgiven for wishing to bypass the subject of necrophiliac killers. The Dahmers and Bundys, Geins and Nilsens do NOT strike us as being lovers, at least not in the sense that is most aligned to our present subject. We find the idea of going through tedious true-crime particulars meaningless for this slim volume. We are here for romance.

8. The Fast-Decaying Image

Elvis, Marilyn, James Dean...our Sacred Dead. The television, music, and movie celebrities we hope to preserve in their "prime of youth" forever and ever, as if memory were embalming fluid, and their digital preservation, in the form of video recordings and film, a vicarious romance we can all, to a greater or lesser degree, indulge in.

We want to keep these icons of pop fresh and young, desirable forever, going back, again and again, to the moment we inculcated our sacred romance with their slinky movements, their boldness and flame of talent, their image, their...innate beingness.

But then our love affair was cruelly interrupted. Just as many cannot let go in their personal relationships when someone dies, so to is it that many, many people will build virtual shrines to the fallen entertainer or celebrity.

Elvis is worshiped as a young, handsome, hairy-chested Southern lothario, just a little less bold and beautiful than the angels, who will forever be alive and resplendent in a sort of heavenly white sequined jumpsuit and gold chains. Men will continue to dress like and emulate him, hoping, symbolically, for some of his power, his majesty to rub off on them. Again, the primitive, atavistic belief surfaces in a variety of odd forms.

Elvis, in point of fact, sleeps beneath the earth. He has not been handsome nor desirable for many, many decades. Ditto Marilyn, whose imprisoned image can still arouse the red-blooded male (or in many cases female), even though the final image of her, laid out on a mortuary slab, has stripped her in the minds of everyone who has ever seen it of any illusions of beauty.

We thought the same thing when we saw the funeral photos of River Phoenix. More recently, big stars such as Whitney Houston and Robin Williams have bid farewell to us, shuffling off this mortal coil. They will, of course, be forever

enshrined in the hearts of fans and nostalgia buffs, those who are attracted to that intangible quality they possessed, that spark, that certain *something* that harkens to us, inviting us back to better, more care-free days.

Michael Jackson was a man much-impersonated and emulated while he was alive. How will his image be preserved now that he is gone?

Will anyone laugh at Robin Williams's comedies now that he has, by his own hand, ended his life? Will they not be seen as a form of morbid curiosity?

What is it in a fantasy image that we hold, that we find it impossible to divest ourselves of? We are dimly aware that the objects of our posthumous veneration do not look like our photographic images of them; they are not held in the cage of our memories, and they are not young and sexy and alive. On the contrary, if there is anything left of them at all, it is stinking and hideous. Yet, there is a disconnect there, a trap wherein memory haunts us; with an image, with a ghost that we cannot shake. No matter what we logically assume, the dead individual or celebrity becomes some strange, vampiric thing, a love hotter than any in hell because, for us, forever beyond the grasp of our mortal touch.

9. The Song Remains the Same

So many celebrities from my youth have

passed on that it would be impossible to mention even a fraction of them here. Most recently, of course, saw the suicide of comedian Robin Williams. I must admit, I was never a fan, although I couldn't have anticipated the man coming to the sort of macabre ending to which he did.

But his image and voice is with us, seemingly forever, marked in time in some false way, a part of collective memories and dreams; a "symbol" now, instead of a sentient entity.

We may revisit his image in dreams; many will, forever seeing in him some symbol of childhood or innocence. Still others will see in him the tragic figure he became, the one who exemplified the old saw about "the tears of a clown."

Milton said the mind was its own place, could turn a Hell of Heaven...so on and so forth.

Recent odd occurrences have forced the matter of death and death-loving into our consciousness in a more full way. We recently learned of the suicide of a young woman whom we knew of from childhood. This did not especially surprise us for a variety of reasons. Yet, surely, we felt the old chill of our own mortality, as the goose quite literally walked over our grave.

We were sitting at the computer. We received a message about the suicide. At first, your heart jumped a little.

However, as jaded as we are, perhaps, we did not let a filip of emotion spill over into our conscious life.

Unbelievably, my personal philosophy is

largely stoic, and I accept death as unblinkingly and inevitably as I would accept any other event of life. Beyond the initial shock, what of it? It is the common fate of all men, the only time they are ever, truly, brought to a level of equality.

It will happen. No matter a Prince or a little street-sweeper.

Hour after hour, day after day, the song remains the same.

As for the suicided girl, I had a disturbing dream, a sort of misfired premonition beforehand.

In the dream, I was thoroughly good and inebriated at a convenience store that has figured prominently in my dreams before (curiously, I always see the action inside of it from the same angle, a recurring dream that has me both as a participant and a sort of metaphysical surveillance camera).

A young girl, a friend of the suicided girl I mentioned earlier, was standing in front of the counter, flirting with the convenience store clerk. Predictably he is Indian. Despite his better judgement, we all proceed to get very drunk and pass out in the store, me lying in front of the magazine rack, as is customary in these dreams. When I awake, I see that the girl is lying at the side of the counter. I go to wake her, hoping she is not too drunk to drive us back before sunup. Approaching her, I realize she has died in her sleep. perhaps an overdose.

The skin is marbled, the face frozen in a rictus of pain. The hands are held stiffly, unnaturally at the side. Were it not for the

condition of the skin, the immobile expression of the face and arms—who could have known she had died? Possibly it was the lethal combination of alcohol and sedatives.

I can remember nothing further about the dream.

I had, in reality, made love with this girl once (or some facsimile thereof in the second or third degree). Now, in my dream-capture of her, she had dead-ended, her womb become too polluted, too corrupted by the passage of time, her loveliness shorn away by the gross shock of finding her dead, squashed on the filthy linoleum of a convenience store, in a world that exists only a few inches back from my sleeping forehead.

But, to have her old friend actually die, only a short while later, seems too conveniently placed in time for coincidence.

There was no idea for me to romanticize that particular corpse. A short description of a dream I had as recently as last night will lead us in to our last crucial examination, our final round of questioning.

In the dream, I was creeping through a college dormitory, when I spied the familiar, hidden staircase that figures so prominently in so many of my dreams. (Often times, this particular staircase is in the Whitehouse, featuring a conveniently placed shelf of books with an obscure, magic tome revealing the hidden truths of the Kennedy Assassination. At other times it seems to be a variation on the staircase leading upward to Lincoln's private box; the same staircase Booth

climbed. (I also climbed it when visiting Washington in 1990.)

It is very dark, and, as I approach the top, I realize the staircase essentially leads nowhere, except to a small, attic-like landing, wherein a large woman is lying on a mattress, watching television. She is watching a film of *Evita* with Madonna. She turns, smiles in embarrassment, says, "I've never seen it."

Neither have I, but it as good of a reminder as any that Evita's busy cadaver is something I still need to touch upon. I lie down beside the woman, quickly fall asleep.

When I awake, I realize that she is gone. Panicking, for I know the invisible evil that lurks in this hidden, upper room, I quickly make for the narrow, dark staircase, while a ghost intones in my ear, "Candy, I love you." Cursing in fear, I have dragged my pillow and mattress with me, and realize that I have left my pants upstairs. (This is a common motif in my dreams.)

I don't want to go back up there, but realize I can't very well wander aroundn without my pants on.

As for Evita Peron, her corpse was the object of much fixation.

The wife of Argentine dictator Juan Peron passed away unexpectedly in 1952, much-beloved of her people, and her devoted husband, who planned to have her enshrined in a manner fit for Egyptian royalty. Her tomb was to be an enormous structure, rivaling the size of our own Statue of

Liberty, and, like Lenin before her, she was to be preserved in a glass coffin and the object of visitation and veneration by those who wanted one last look.

Owing to a military coup, however, this was not to be. Peron fled his own country in exile, and, unable to secure the remains of his beloved former wife, left the corpse to vanish into the night and fog of a military junta unwilling to cooperate with him, later revealing who had the remains and how they were disposed.

(It should be noted that, due to the advanced techniques of a world renowned physician whose name is given as Ara, Evita was embalmed in such a manner as to preserve her fleshly comeliness --if a cadaver can be said to have such--forever.)

Evita's corpse remained the object of much speculation until the return of Juan Peron to power in his homeland in 1974. It was then revealed that the corpse had been buried in a tomb in Milan under the name "Maria Maggi." Peron secured the remains yet again, and, with his third wife, decided to display the cadaver on a pedestal near their dining table.

Yes, you read that last correctly.

(Somewhat mirroring the posthumous fate of the very ancient cadaver of Jeremy Bentham, the philosopher and Oxford Don who has been displayed as a museum piece [sans his original head, the decrepitude of which, owing to a poor experiment in mummification, make it awfully macabre] since his death in 1832. Strike another

blow for *Ripley's*)

Peron himself died shortly after his third run as Argentine president, and his wife had the remains of Evita (whose condition had, in point of fact, deteriorated somewhat, due to improper handling of the remains) interred in her family crypt in Buenos Aires. It is reportedly extremely secure.



The beautiful, doomed, Evita Peron, wife of Argentinian dictator Juan Peron. Evita's preserved corpse, owing to a coup, had a strange journey before coming to its final resting place in the Duarte family tomb.

10. The Other Mrs. Havishams

Perhaps it is unwise for an author to admit, baldly, that he has failed to find an answer to the niggling questions posed by the acts of men like Carl Von Cosel and Sergeant Bertrand. Is it that some men and women conflate sex and death, funereal romance for physical romance, the act of possession with the magic of eternal preservation, the “fountain of youth” springing from their loins, watering the dry paps of their perverted paramours?

Perhaps it is men who desire an object of complete control. Modern males are somewhat laid bare (no pun intended) by their desire for “sex dolls” or “Real Dolls,” an subject explored in *Apocalypse Culture’s* less-impressive sequel.

Although the original blow-up dolls were about as lifelike as any toy could be expected to be, today’s artificial cybervariety promise latex exteriors and chillingly realistic facial features; even jointed limbs that may be posed.

Is this a part of the same impulse? Perhaps the niceties of romance and marriage are merely covers for the bestial impulse that some men cannot control, the idea that a woman, alive or inert, dead or even an artificial puppet, is much-preferable to dealing with the personality of a thinking, sentient actual woman, who can talk back.

But then, most men do not indulge a necrophiliac fantasy. (At least, we do not believe that they do.)

Erich Fromm divided classes of men into

the necrophiliac personality and the life-loving, seeing in the necrophiliac personality the roots of war, fascism, psychopathy and destruction. The necrophiliac personality is rigid, doctrinaire, fascistic; unyielding, exemplifying the sort of architects of oblivion that dreamed up Auschwitz, wherein Mr. Fromm was interred as an inmate.

The necrophiliac personality is depersonalized from his living cohorts, is focused on the ritualism of death and funerals, goes goose-steeping off into a future where women could very well be replaced by androids. The character of Patrick Bateman, from the novel (and subsequent film) of Brett Ellis's *American Psycho*, might exemplify this personality, to whom physical perfection, material objects, appearances, surface, surface, surface...is the ONLY thing that matters. Emotion is frozen in an infantile murk; there is only an aching void to fill, like an empty stomach that can never be satisfied.

I must confess to perhaps being a necrophiliac personality.

I have little idea of how to finish this little book. (Perhaps a writer should not admit that.)

Should I close with a short cultural survey of necrophiliac themes? These are endemic in popular rock music, such as Alice Cooper, Bauhaus, The Misfits, and in the sordid and generic vampire sagas pumped out by Hollywood year after year, to massive financial returns. Why is it that we wish to romance the dead? To preserve Elvis and Marilyn in the formaldehyde jars of our conscious minds,

until it is impossible to separate their paltry, commercialized pop-culture images from the moldering earth in which they lie?

I am perhaps a necrophiliac personality, so maybe that is why I am drawing a blank.

To make love to the dead, to possess the object of accursed fantasy, to transgress and cross that barrier between worlds, is perhaps to engage in a holy communion with another species, to know a purity of intent unknown to mortal bones. The thing itself, the fantastical image, becomes a sacred vessel into which the love and hope of a new tomorrow can be poured. To dance and dwell, forevermore, with the object of our most heated, forbidden desire.

To know this object as OURS, and ours alone. To touch the power of the necromantic spirit, to commune with THEM, a race hideously removed, yet hideously US, whose waxen, stiffened features become a crepitating time-vessel of the past moldering into the present.

This poetry of the grave CANNOT stop; nor, perhaps, can it be plumbed for psychological nuggets. Does a “necrophiliac personality” truly exist in any objective sense?

The vampire bends to kiss the living, to make the Living as Food. In our current pop cultural references, the vampire is a sexy, sexualized being of eternal youth and vitality, a Brad Pitt perhaps, or a character from *Twilight*.

In olden times, when death was a closer companion to the living, the vampire was portrayed as a repellent leech who, slipping in the

form of mist from his unhallowed grave, roamed village and countryside battenning on the living.

Often, the dead relatives were the targeted victims. One story has a man, upon awakening, confronting the foul, stinking revenant of his father, who demands plaintively that he be given “something to eat.”

When the son, along with his cohorts, opens the nearly-fresh grave, he finds, to his astonishment (but to his surprise?) that the corpse of his father looks as if it could rise from the grave instantly—he should, the hearer of the tale thinks, have already surmised this. Upon cutting open the heart, they find it suffused with fresh blood.

This is the same superstition that, centuries later, would convince locals in New England, like Edwin Brown and his family, to exhume their own relatives, in the morbid anticipation that to these undead shades, indeed, “the living was food.”

But perhaps vampirism is not what we are really discussing.

Dennis Nilsen, the British Jeffrey Dahmer, spent hours in repose, naked, in front of a mirror, visualizing himself as one among the dead. His passions spilled over into necrophiliac homicide; were it not for the fact that he managed to clog the sewage system in his flat, he might never have been caught.

What did he see in his mirrored reflection? Was he visualizing his place among THEM? Among the dead, whom he loved? (A story H.P. Lovecraft wrote for C.M. Eddy Junior, published in the pulp magazine *Weird Tales*, is suggestive of the mad

love experienced by Nilsen and others. It is this story, a tale originally considered too controversial [still considered so, unbelievably] for newsstand publication, that is Lovecraft's most sordid. The tale is the first-person narrative of an obsessed mortician, who turns to suggested necrophilia and murder to feel that innate, close connection with "the dead, whom I love.")

Nilssen's obsession, like that of Dahmer, was to keep the perverted object of desire close, forever; eternal. By consuming these body parts, by rendering them little more than "zombies," Dahmer could keep them as a part of himself, commune with the Dead, love in a way few men could ever really appreciate, in a way that tested the boundries of the flesh, of the tolerance of the body, of the barriers we erect between ourselves and the mouldering ramparts of time...could plumb the untested waters of the sacrosanct and the vile.

He could be one with Azrael. He and Nilssen could keep them forever.

Forever is a long, long time.

To close (because we must, when perforce the moon calls us home from our morbid sojourns), we are like the *other* Mrs. Havisham.

We have been jilted at the altar moments before the wedding, the object of our desire having defrauded us through death perhaps, but all the more absconding with something precious entrusted to it. So we dance in the darkness of our drab rooms, cut off from the sunlight, forever basking in an eternal moment that waits upon the threshold of all of our hopes and dreams.

The room could be the dining hall of a Victorian estate, a beer factory as in *Great Expectations* (the novel in which the macabre character of Mrs. Havisham first jumped from the pages at us), or it could be the bedroom of an eccentric, mad old man who demands the satisfaction of his love and passion, even if he has to remove it from a moldering crypt.

Perhaps it is the laboratory of eternal hope, dreamt of in the film version of Hawthorne's "Dr. Heidegger's Experiment," in which the long-dead wife of a long-suffering doctor is resurrected from her tomb by a mysterious fluid which restores health and youth, for a time (and at a price).

Whatever the case, the necrophiliac personality, the death-obsessed, romances the few tendrils of a past that can never come to fruition, because to be dead is, seemingly, to be beyond reach of all but pallid memory.

A few items can be saved as fetishes. We can wear our tattered wedding dress, sit at our uneaten meal, watch our rotten cake covered slowly by pestilence, nibbled by rats. Decay will follow us everywhere, but in our mind we can stave it off, we can dance in our darkness, sing of our love, lost in our eternal moment.

I once touched the dead, and the skin was like touching rubber. The smell of the embalmed body was like unto the smell of spearmint and cloying bouquets. The face was a mere husk. Did the soul hover about, waiting for the physical change? Was it confused? Had it found its exit way into the netherworld?

Their ceremonies, their earthly possessions, their memorabilia—all things imbued with a sacredness, a power that in most instances is relegated to the dustbin. The cane of an old dead man—does it retain his energy, his fleeting thought and memories, the agonies of his body, as certain psychic sensitives claim? Does a communion with this possible electromagnetic force constitute a sort of psychic necrophilia?

Author Whitley Strieber, in his bestselling *Communion*, commented that his first thought, upon encountering his alleged extraterrestrial visitors, was that “they are our dead.” Alas, if it were only that simple!

We cling to Elvis, Marilyn, James Dean, to the image. To the representation, fondling the false, lying memory, making love to our still-born fantasies, treasuring the flesh that is forever just beyond our grasp, out of reach; beyond.

Like Mrs. Havisham, we brood heavily in darkness, waiting for the bridegroom, cheated by the implacable scythe of Father Time.

Tick-tock, the moments go. No matter what we do, no matter who we love, their fate is the same, common fate of all men.

We can picture their bluing flesh. They become a “thing,” an alien race. The OTHER. The Dead.

Like the poor, consumptive victims of New England vampirism, we suspect that the Dead May Love US Too; that they are feeding upon us in incestuous communion from beyond the cold confines of their coffins and crypts.

We have written this booklet for selfish reasons.

We must confess, as a confirmed Grade-A NECROPHILIOUS PERSONALITY, we probably can't be accused of caring very much about YOU.

Indeed, this entire essay has been one exercise in self-indulgence. Our only aim was to satisfy our own peculiar fetishistic associations. If you don't consider that valid WE DON'T GIVE A DAMN.

We see ourselves as a True Romantic.

We set the scene. We envision the bed, covered in pale, sickly roses, the wafting funereal stench of slow-decaying lillies. Everything pooled in dips of darkness, icy frost, like the cool-tongued blast of wind from a netherworld, relegating this place with the atmosphere of a morgue.

The nightstand on the bed is heaped with black flowers, rosaries, religious icons, crucifixes, *objets d'arte*; symbols of devotion, tokens of Our Love.

Scattered about may be crime scene photographs, pictures of Bonnie and Clyde (especially Bonnie, lying in her casket peacefully, beautifully; a waxen effigy of her own bullet-riddled body).

On the Victrola, an old record of organ music. Or, perhaps, we could bend to our very own Wurlitzer, and fire off a few weeping, gothic strains.

It is well past midnight; the witching hour.

On the bed, lying in grim repose, the

mummified form of my beloved. Perhaps she has been remodded from scratch, become a thing of silken finery and molten wax, a smooth, giant porcelain doll of strangely ethereal beauty.

Part 2

11. Revisiting Von Cosel

The story of Otto Carl Tanzler has had an enormous impact on my life; I based my first long novel, *Buried*, upon the grim eccentric's ghastly necromantic love. Thus, it was with some trepidation that I finally borrowed the book *Undying Love* by Ben Harrison (Two Bens to write the Von Cosel story? What are the odds?). After all, I don't want to go off comparing my own work to someone else's, not even subconsciously.

In point of fact, I didn't have to. And that is not at all what I ended up doing. Instead, I begin to reconstruct my novel, to chop away the excess fat until the Von Cosel saga was more streamlined, more sordid and tragic and infused with an even greater surrealism in my mind, if that is conceivable.

We can return to the night wherein the strange thing inside the man, which lay coiled and sleeping like some hideous, schizophrenic serpent, began to slowly unwind. Oh, in his diary (which we before had no idea existed), he makes reference to the fact that, to him at least, Elena De Hoyas,

though she has lost the physical senses and the ability to perambulate across the crusted earth, is still existant somewhere, beyond, waiting for her chance to escape the cruel clutches of eternal repose.

Hence, his careful ministrations to the body: his detailed accounts of preserving it, reburying it in a tomb of his own construction; the grotesque hours spent peeling back the burial shroud so as to preserve the skin in his own special solutions.

He makes the strange claim to have initially preserved the body in an incubator mechanism of his own construction, floated in a chemical compound that sounds suspiciously like formaldehyde. Von Cosel the Scientist was an ever-inventive, madcap individual. It is revealed in *Undying Love* that he was undertaking the construction of an experimental plane with vast wheels...and no wings.

His employers at the Naval Hospital (where he initially encountered the tuberculoid Elena) let him keep the thing on government property, until finally forcing him to move it to his beachfront hideaway. (This removal is a comic scene that becomes a farce through the streets of Key West, as onlookers turn out to gawk when Elena's cousin Mario drives the truck hauling the worthless, although undoubtedly ingenious vehicle, through the streets of the little city. Mario is said to have waved, smiled, and decidedly enjoyed the attention.)

But, let us take up the tale where we feel it

most meet and proper.

The concentration camp was perched along the coast. The gates were opened for a short time each afternoon to allow the inmates free access, in and out, to the edge of the vast ocean. (Where were they to go? Were they to swim shark-infested waters to freedom?)

The old German Von Cosel went one late afternoon to the beach, liking the rumble and toss of the surf, the squaking of gulls above, the quiet crisp of the sand beneath his sore, aching feet. Ahead of him, he could see that a boat, or...something, had come apart on the water. Loose boards had become caught, like bits of food and bone, in the hungry jaws of the great jagged, rocky coastline.

He went to retrieve this booty, quickly ascertaining that he might construct for himself, out of the tumulus, a quite proper shelter or hideaway, using the rocks as ballast to hold it together. This he set about doing, day after day, and also he set his mind on another task.

He had found a huge log, rolled about in the surf until the edges, according to him, were quite rounded off. With this log, "...came into my mind at once that I might[...]carve out an organ and I could almost see the instrument ready before me. All that was needed was to work out the measurements and details, and to obtain the additional materials required for such work."

This was an industrious man, a man that could not be kept down by the conditions in an

Australian internment camp. According to his own confessions, he had traveled in India and the Orient, absorbing their own strange philosophies and secrets, and he had been shipped to this prison prepared, as it were, to stare death itself in the face.

There would be many cold brushes with death, in fact.

He was walking along the outskirts of Key West, absorbed in his own strange reveries, when he spied, in a gulch below, a number of shifting forms. Already he could hear the moaning, the quiet imprecations, the stifled breath.

He raced, as quickly as his legs would carry him, down the weed-choked side of the ravine, until he came to the thick, viscous mudslide that had swallowed so many, many lives. Some of them seemed as frozen in time as if they had been the varied denizens of Pompeii, caught forevermore in the suffocating lava that previsioned Hell.

He began to slush through the miserable, killing stuff, up to his calves, when, suddenly, he came upon HER.

She had been lying face down in the murk, had suffocated, and even now, as he turned her about, he could not see the face, covered, as it were, in a miasma of muck.

He began to think that the three-dozen inert, flyblown corpses were NOT, in fact the victims of a mudslide, but that they had in fact been murdered, then deposited unceremoniously in the gulch. He took Elena in his arms, she being

his only concern.

“...her features became clear, and I could see that only the bridge of her nose had been broken, but that there was still life in her. I took her in my arms and laid her on the higher ground. Then I did everything to restore life...”

The ingenious technician next found himself, at this point in the dream, taking the body of Elena to his X-Ray lab and laying her on the table to examine for internal injuries. Whether he found any or not he doesn't specify.

12. So Begins the Year 1931!

After writing Elena about his dream, she quite promptly sent her sister 'round to warn him of such nocturnal reveries.

Elena, and her staunchly traditional Cuban family, did not care for what Benjamin Harrison describes as the “arrogant, condescending” Von Cosel, who, despite the vast differences in age between himself and the lovely, terminally-ill young Cuban woman, was infatuated with her to the point of madness.

During a time of bleak economic crisis, he found the money, somehow, to lavish her with gifts of expensive jewelry, to purchase for her a bed, and to construct and adapt his own bizarre, quack inventions and medical cure-alls in an attempt to stave off the consumptive death which would claim her life at the tender age of twenty-two.

Elena's family, though forbidding in countenance, eventually began to grudgingly accept, perhaps out of a growing sense of desperation, the ministrations of the mad "doctor," (in his diary, Von Cosel writes, "Engrossed in science after science, I took, at the age of twenty-four, degrees as master of arts in medicine, in philosophy, in mathematics, physics, chemistry, etc. having passed nine different examinations beside the S.M."), although they must have thought the bizarre, cobbled-together apparatus he brought with him to be quite strange, and even frightening.

(Most of these devices seem to have utilized electrical current; Von Cosel's explanations of their efficacy leave the reader, the layperson, feeling baffled. Whatever their intended purpose, of course, they all were a resounding failure at fulfilling the one true aim of Von Cosel's existence (now that he had sloughed off his wife and daughters): to save the life of the twenty-two year old tuberculoid.

We relate here the mysteries of Von Cosel's mediumistic abilities. His description of sitting in the "Green Room" one evening, perusing his scientific texts (accordingly, besides the newly discovered world of flight, the mysteries of X-rays and electricity, and of art, are in a self-confessed sense, all that consumed him).

While studying thusly, a pencil began to perambulate across the face of the table. He might have frowned at such a thing, or he might have

simply continued reading, trying, in as unobtrusive a manner as possible, not to interfere with any spectral incursions that might be manifesting. In short order, books, and finally the table itself began to levitate upward. Crockery smashed in a glass cabinet. Retreating to the safety of his curtained alcove (Wherein he was painting, for the delectation of all and sundry, a painting of the beautiful Jewess, “Judith”), he was shocked to have the curtain between the rooms burst into flame. The painting in the next room was thrown from the easel, as if by invisible fingers, and smashed on the floor.

He heard footsteps down the hall. Assuming that he had an intruder, he produced his pistol and went searching for the culprit. It was to no avail. He was plagued by an invisible foe.

Consulting his mother, she made him aware of the ghost of Countess Cosel (who died a lonely alchemist, having incurred the wrath of the noble to whom she was romantically attached). Unperturbed by such obtrusiveness, Carl shrugged off the poltergeist phenomenon, but boned up on spiritualist and metaphysical literature. Or so he claims.

It was a short time later that, while lying half-asleep, he peeped open his eyes to find himself intruded upon by the phantom countess, and another specter, the image of a young Spanish woman. The countess quite sternly warned Carl to disassociate himself from women like the one on the painting she smashed to pieces.

“I have been trying to contact you for quite

some time, my boy, but you are too preoccupied with your scientific studies..." she in effect tells him. He must have been cowering in bed, in astonishment, but, when he set eyes on what the phantom countess claimed was his "promised bride," it seared his mind forever.

It was later, at a famous cemetery in Italy, that he next saw the apparition. Coming, at twilight, upon the noble, marble statue of a life-like woman that had died when she was but twenty-one or twenty-two, he was astounded to read that her name was

ELENA

and enraptured, he followed her ghostly image (which emerged from the statue) until he lost her amidst the tombs and monuments. The Carbonari could not help him, either; this ghost had been sighted before, for time out of mind.

But she was HIS promised, his beloved.

Next, he describes two weeks spent with this rapacious, enigmatical spirit. At his home in Australia, before being secluded in an internment camp before the war, he is awakened one night by what he believes to be a ghastly intruder.

Starting up in bed, he goes to investigate, and is met, instead with the image of the wraith, the BELOVED, Elena...a pre-mortem spirit manifestation that accompanies him, to and fro, for a short period of time, having dinner with him, crawling into bed with him on dark, dreary, lonely nights...

And then there is the sojourn in Havana, where he is further haunted by her image, her luxuriant Spanish visage, amidst the gay festivities of carnivale. Perplexed as he must be by this weird, enduring phantasm, he seems to take it in a sort of speculative stride until, ensconced in Florida, he is fatefully brought together with the true, living woman he has seen, so far, only as a revenant, a shade.

He is building an airplane.

We may take it that the fated plane never actually flew. Perhaps it was never meant to; it was every bit as much a prisoner of his morbid fantasies as was Elena's tomb, as was Elena herself. We wonder exactly why the hospital administration allowed him to keep such a device on the grounds, let alone work on it. We have no real explanation of this; yet, we know, from photographs, that the thing actually existed.

It was meant to carry Elena to a private island, to an Elysium sanctuary, to outer space, where it was hoped that the cosmic rays would cure her of her tuberculoid illness. This fantasy is impressed on the dying woman to such a degree that she allows the fruitless invention to be named after her. It is as sterile, as lifeless an abortion as the cold, hard walls of a morgue—maybe a crypt. It seems to the reader a vast, empty, hollow womb, a place wherein things could be preserved for the sake of fantasy, where a grown man could keep his foetid doll in a vast duo chamber, relishing the fantasy of escape, imagining clouds, and finally the

moon and the stars outside of the portal windows, as interstellar space wept by at lightspeed, away from Earth and time and death.

Cold and sterile, though, and grounded, would the fantasy escape vehicle remain.

It was not long before the “special ministrations” of the erstwhile count were being foisted on the Cuban emigre, a situation that did nothing to console, comfort, or please her traditional family, or a father that one imagines as a rotund, cigar-chomping little man with a balding pate and a bad temper. Whether any of that is true or not, the fact remains that the eccentric, besotted old ghoul was viewed warily and with an understandable leer of apprehension by Elena’s family.

The family was placated by the freedom with which Von Cosel lavished money and gifts upon the dying young woman: jewelry, dresses, a new bed (her previous one broke under the weight of visitors piled upon it), a radio—gaudy baubles in such a profusion that one, understandably, wonders where the ne’r do well count managed to get all of his money. His admission is only of ever being employed as an X-Ray technician at the Naval Hospital in Key West. (Later, he seems to intimate that he had a considerable amount from the German government—for his service in the war? Who knows? Perhaps his family inheritance could account for this seemingly inexhaustable store of wealth.)

It is soon that Von Cosel has begun a series

of quack remedies, some of which are so improbable as to defy credulity. He feeds Elena special tinctures of beef extract, gold, and commences the building of electrical apparatus described as “a million-volt transformer.” Whether any of this has any truth in it, what the possible efficacy of such occult nostrums could possibly be, one can only conjecture.

Can we imagine, for a moment, a “million-volt transformer” apparatus ? Of what possible efficacy, in the treatment of tuberculosis, could such an outlandish, science fictional machine have? We are later treated to the bizarre spectacle of Von Cosel describing his “treatment”; apparently, it involves forcing a sort of electrified tube down Elena’s throat, the electric “bite” of which is both painful, and somewhat erotically exhilarating.

The sexual subtext here cannot be easily discounted. Of course, this seems, all, like some more clinical, morbid fantasy, a way of imagining into reality the god-like dreams of a world beyond, one wherein a man can, Prometheus-like, offer the lightning of the gods to reanimate the dead. Victor Frankenstein paid dearly for that, although his reanimated lover was not undead, but, stitched-together, UNBORN. Technically.

From The Lost Diary of Count von Cosel:

Inside the tomb I laid my hands on
the casket and felt a strong
electric current passing through

my arm. The metal of this inner casket felt quite warm, almost of body temperature, whereas the outer casket was cold. The pleasing smell which emanated from the valve was particularly strong that night..."

The pleasing smell!
The noxious funk of the rotting dead.
Indeed, this seems to have been perfume to Von Cosel, the romantic flower-essence of his withered rose.

He continues:

As I always did, I held my hands over the valve into this beloved odor of my beautiful bride, Elena. It was remarkable how long this odor clung to my hands; even washing would not remove it...

To von Cosel, Elena is alive, in a weird, semi-life or half-life; a state he describes thusly:

Naturally, the life of the dead is very different from normal. All the reactions are tremendously slowed down. There were days when Elena's Spirit remained perfectly silent, and again days when it would answer to my words after an interval of fifteen minutes or more.

He is reanimating her, bringing her into a new semblance of being. The dead are the "other," something almost akin to the extraterrestrial, shades of Whitley Strieber's musings. They are alive, in the mind of the corpse-lover; yet, they are still separate, lacking animation; it is almost as if the body begins to act as a gateway for a kind of localized but disincorporated intelligence.

Victor Ardisson confessed himself puzzled as to why severed heads of his little corpse-lovers would NOT answer him. Had his mind slipped so much from the nexus of reality to a grim, indeterminate place wherein to actually receive an answer from the head of a dead child would be expected. In what realm or terrain do such psychotics wander?

The recent Russian corpse collector, Anatoly Moskvina, a grim professor of history from Novgorod, who was known to frequent cemeteries, was found with the mummified remains of 29 young girls in his small, stinking apartment (which he shared, incredibly, with elderly parents), corpses he had exhumed and taken home, like von Cosel, to "reanimate", with a combination of plaster and baking soda, silk stockings and glass eyes, giving them "tinkling tummies" by inserting music boxes inside their chest cavities.

He gave them glass eyes, he claimed, so they could "watch cartoons" with him. The necrophile, at least, the romantic variety, crosses the threshold between life and death, keeping one

foot in the grave, and one foot in a playmate fantasy of perfectly preserved dollies that can never, ever reject them; who are, in a sense, full and reborn in innocence, "beyond good and evil," and beyond corruption, for having already crossed over into that dim, eternal night.

Ever since the moon began to wane, Elena had begun to sing in her casket in a very soft, clear voice. which became just a little stronger from night to night. it was always the same old Spanish song about a lover who opens the grave of his dead bride. I could distinctly hear and understand its every word. This always lasted for no longer perhaps than ten minutes. and then she fell to silence, as if expecting me to speak.

"'Darling,' I would then say, 'very soon now the moon will change, the hour approaches when I shall take you home with me. I will clean you and wash you and put on your bridal dress, with veil and crown and all. Thus, as my beloved bride, you will *stay with me forever*. (Emphasis mine.)

Part 3

13. La Boda Negra

I. The body was tossed to and fro in the surf.

Diometes paused for a moment, listening to some vast inner calling, some crystalline voice out of the blue; perhaps out of the black.

Slanting rays of sunlight painted the cascades in rapturous color. Time stood still for a moment. For him, time must always stand still.

He approached slowly. The thing was bloated in the surf, filled to bursting with salt water. Yet, still supple, still exuding the elusive quality of coy humanity that must have marked her in life. In truth, she could have been a pale blue doll tossed to an fro on the gentle tide, washed in salty brine and sand, spied from above by the beady, hungry eyes of suspicious gulls.

She was still shrouded in her sopping robes. Who was she? Who had she been? Had she been a wife, a mother? He didn't know. His mind peered over the lifeless, bloated visage, into the unseeing eyes, seeing, for a moment, another image, an image that was dear to him, and hateful too.

"Your daughter has been unfaithful to me. And with her own flesh and blood she has worked that which is unseemly. Whatever are we to do?"

He spoke calmly, serenely to father Troezen, his careful, thoughtful words underpinning the old man's shame.

"I shall..."

But the old man's lips quivered and his brow fell heavily in pained anguish. The sun rose and the sun set, illuminating the world and then casting it into shuddering darkness. The days failed to grasp his consciousness very tightly; he surmised

he was simply insulating himself from the pain of regret, of rejection.

The old man beat Evopis fiercely, her shrieks of protestation and cries of abuse ringing throughout the household. Shuffling servants bowed their heads low over their toil, trying as best as they could to ignore the shouts of accusation, the tears of remorse, the sounds of the blows falling.

The brother and lover simply skulked in the shadows, a look of shame and dishonor crossing his brow. Soon, he would go into exile, ride away on a donkey, cover his face with his cloak. He would go about the world aimlessly, to seek absolution for his sin. But, he was already wondering: could those without shame truly find forgiveness? Inside, he felt few regrets, except, of course, for the crime of being found out.

Dimoetes had walked in on their mad embrace. His eyes had bulged and his cheeks had flushed hot at seeing the brother thrust himself between the ample thighs of his own sister, Dimoetes' sweet little Evopis, the maidenhead burst like a grape. And this was not an act of rape, as her clinging fingers and cries of sweet, remorseless passion gave testimony to. Both of the shamed lovers tried to hide themselves from Dimoetes' baleful stare, and the brother ran into the shadows.

But he had seen. He *knew*.

However, like so many other recent images, it faded into the obscurity of remembrance as just another scene, void of feeling and emotion, as cold

and flat as a fish out of water; a portrait plucked from the storehouse of recent memory, almost like an image from a dream.

II. The feet of a corpse are never beautiful.

Staring upward, he could see her hanging there by her scrawny neck, her hair, now shot with streaks of white, falling over her pained, pinched, inert face; the face of a battered and bruised doll. She had ended her life when her lover left, when their taboo romance was discovered, when she was threatened to be turned out into the streets like a dog, cast away like a leper in disgrace.

But with her dying breath she had cursed the man who did this to her. No, not the seductive brother, but her own HUSBAND, whom she died despising as a traitor, an usurper of passionate, if forbidden romance. Or so the servants whispered.

His cold lack of affect shocked others, but he confessed that, at this point, "I cannot allow myself to feel. The pain is too great."

To which the old servant woman, who he knew loved him passionately, replied, "Go then. Find your soul, your destiny. But, in the fullness of time, come back to us."

And so he went. And the dreamlike days passed. And it was then that he found himself walking the coastline, staring at the thing washed up from the depths, the thing that should, by all

rights, repulse him, but did not.

He carried the thing home. Its sopping garments, its burial shroud acted as a sort of pulley by which to manage the dead weight. But, as light as the poor thing was, it was nothing for him to, eventually, pick her up in his powerful arms, take her back to his dark, dank abode.

He uncovered her face. His private angel, his little doll, his vision of heaven. He remembered the dead, corpse feet of Evopis, her swinging form suspended like some grim lantern from the ceiling of the bridal chamber. Ah! Here was a fulfilment, then, of the promise of his wedding. His black wedding; his marriage to the dead.

He swept his electrified eyes across the face, drank in the deathly pallor, caressed the cold flesh. Bending, he placed the first few kisses upon the cold, shriveling cheek. He began to play the folds of the burial shroud, his heart hammering in his chest at the blasphemous taboo he was transgressing, the social bond he was breking. In his mind, he endowed the cold husk with voice, with gaiety and warmth, laughter, romance and love. He entered her, thrusting in mad passion against entropy, seeding the rebirth of a romance that could defy death and time. (Or, as one would put it, “putting his loaves in a cold oven.”)

He built a life for her in his dreams, endowing her with all of the attributes of a living, breathing woman, a woman that could never be; the “Bride of the Black Wedding,” the image of perfection—even as she rot and lie stinking in his

bed, drawing vermin.

It was not long that, like sands flowing through the fingers of a desperate man, all attempts to resurrect the image of her, to make love to the one yielding perfect (because silent, malleable and inert) romance of his life, that he realized her woman hood had become too rotted with corruption to accomodate his lust any longer. Indeed, she was now a putrified, dessicated thing, a thing that stank abominably, that was too rotted to be enjoyed, to be mocked-up in a fantasy vision of inviolable, perfect, and dream-like romance.

"I shall build for you the perfect crypt, oh my sweet, my dearest one. It shall be a bridal chamber the likes of which no one has ever seen before, or shall ever see again. And I will stay with you there, all the day and the night.."

(One is here reminded of Annabell Lee, whom Poe vowed he would "...all the night tide, lie down by the side, of my darling, my darling, my life and my bride..." Also of the short poem by Henry King, Bishop of Chichester which has the words: "Stay for me there: I will not fail / To meet thee in that hollow vale.")

And so build it he did, a tomb in the side of a cliff. And if it was but a hollowed cave, a poor specimen of what he, in his fevered imaginings, had intended, it was not his fault, but merely his isolation and poverty to blame. But, in his mind's eye, the walls were smooth, perfect, engraved with proclamations of his great love, forming a stone screen for the images of his hot imaginings.

Yet, he knew it for what it was: simply

another version of the lifeless, dead womb, a huge, confining prison-like womb that would never birth new life, but merely contain the seeds of one brutally and unceremoniously ended, the last vestiges of material life as it seeped into nothingness, forgotten.

And so, falling upon the sacophagi in a fit of terror and shame, his emotions finally giving vent in a torrent of grief more powerful than any he had ever felt before, a deep metaphysical anguish that felt crushed beneath the futility of life and time, the dissolution and inevitability of entropy, decay and death, he plunged his sword into his breast up to the hilt, and, pouring his life's blood across the stone floor of the crypt, died beside his love, and is with her still.

14. Perils of the Poisoned Prick

It is said Herod the Tetrarch had his wife Madeline embalmed in honey, preserved, and carried out sexual relations with her SEVEN YEARS after her death. He built for her a consummate palace, another stale, artificial womb/tomb, to enshrine her memory.

(His own memory must have been faltering when he decided to entertain the amorous delights of Salome, at the terminal expense of John the Baptist. At any rate, the Talmud informs us of Herod's "Out-Heroding" of himself, insomuch as the subject of post-mortem amorousness is concerned.)

A necrophile, quoted in Aggrawal, from a journal article in the 1940 edition of the *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, confesses to the Fear of a Poisonous Penis.

A wee orphan of 1890 or thereabouts, he was afflicted sorely with a medical condition causing his testicles to swell, relief from the condition being gained only through the administratio of a “tap” on the testes, which left him scarred physically and emotionally.

Convinced, in some paranoid fixation, that his prick was full of “poison,” he found the commencement of normal sexual relations quite impossible, substituting a fetish for fondling dead bodies.

(He did stress that his only occupation with these cadavars was the molestation of their breasts and kissing their cold, rubbery lips. The idea of intercourse with them was strictly verboten, as “it’s wrong.” He liked rubbing the breasts because of their softness. The kissing he cared not to fully explain, but we can well imagine what need this fulfilled. He would then masturbate furiously with the tactile sensation of dead flesh still fresh in his nerves endings.)

But it was the poison inside of him, the “spitting cobra” in his pants, that stymied his (forgive the expression) “intercourse” with living beings, relegating him to the poisoned dregs of the corpse molesters.

In his own words:

“Never had money; never bothered;
I was afraid. I had a little trouble

with the testicle; they got pinoned
during an an operation. I was
frightened to have relations after
that..."

We love the image of a thing, not the thing
itself. Only the dreamlike ideal of a thing; this is
what we fall in love with; this is what we crave.
There may be no reality in it. It may be as fleeting,
as illusory, as a fevered dream.

It often is.

Once the reality behind the beloved object
manifests itself, once cold, hard truth replaces
idealized dream, once the smell of the breath, of
the churning, unlovely bowels, of the sweat and
funk of the body penetrates the web of fantasy, we
find ourselves dispossessed of romantic notions.
Often, we find the schism between the burning,
insatiable desire of realization through love, and
the transitory and largely illusory nature of beauty
so confusing, we find ourselves chained to a
needling, wanting, guilty desire we cannot escape.
We become prisoners of our love, captives to an
ideal that has lost all meaning; marooned among
the objects of affection, we look at the churning
waters from the beached front of our own violated
sense of self. Yearning for the security of our
dreams, we become stalled between the fulfilment
of our wants and needs for security, and our
revulsion of having been suckered into giving
ourselves away, giving what is valuable in us, for
the ilusory. For the image. For the DREAM.

Last night, I dreamt I was with silent film

actress Mabel Normand. It was only the image of Mabel, an image fostered in subconscious dreams and fantasies I probably could never admit, even to myself. Mabel (or Zasu Pitts, or Thelma Todd, or another of my doomed starlets, my own stable of necrofetishistic fantasy playmates) could be recreated in my dream, brought to a semblance of life by the fevered synapses and subconscious mechanisms that attempt, through the significance of an OTHER, to work our own complex psychological sense of self.

Or, maybe I just desire Mabel, and am wrothe because I can never have her. Only the fantasy, the image, the DREAM.

To return:

A blind necrophile (it may have been HE Of The Poisoned Prick, but we are not altogether sure), confessed in a study (Cited once again in Aggrawal's excellent book) of being enamored of the idea of mutilating animals, confessing that a horse or chickens would certainly suffice. Confining himself to zoosadism, or bestialnecrosadism, (or whatever the hell you would want to call it), was the safer alternative to mutilating the cadavers of humans, as he would most certainly be found out. (How could a blind man avoid being discovered at such a shocking endeavor?)

His is a troubling account. Aggrawal classifies him a Class 10 Necrophile (See Appendix G). The reason being (dramatized for lurid effect below):

The little man sat, spittle dribbling from his chin, staring into a place the doctor himself feared to go. Outside, slanting rays of a cruel and indifferent sun shined through the venetian blinds, painting the deep gloom of the psychiatrist's office in a film noir pattern of slanting shadow and diffuse peach illumination.

"So, do you feel you can confide in me this terrible secret? What is it, specifically, that troubles you so much you are loath to relate it, even to a professional?" (It should be duly noted that the author has been accused, at times, of excelling at exposition, and falling flat at character dialog. Perhaps it is because he has an ear primarily for the internal movements and pacings of thought, and not for the large expunging of useless breath and verbiage that make up so much conversation in the modern world. Or, perhaps it is because he rarely speaks to strangers. Who can say?)

The balding man leaned over his cane, his massive jaw working, seeking to spit the words from his dry, cracked lips.

"I was never able to become aroused in my life by a living, breathing thing. My blindness, my lack of companions, kept me in a dark prison, a dangerous place for the mind. Instead, I began to love everything that was death, thinking, in the throes of their agonies, in the quietude of their eternal repose there was, perhaps, a deeper, more gratifying, more real love than any that could be experienced by two living beings."

The doctor stopped to scribble on his pad. Outside, the day drew down to night.

"Can you expand upon that? Is this part of a hatred or resentment? Do you feel, how do you feel about your mother, for instance? What are your feelings in regard to women?"

(It would be instructive if the man had given a proper answer. To the best of his knowledge, the void had stirred within him, blossoming like a sepulchral flower, from the moment he first became aware of the dark prison into which he had been relegated by an accident of birth. Did this mean he hated the world? Perhaps. How to explain the ineffable to a man scribbling on a pad, in pointed, strictured thought, in an office, high atop the city peaks?)

"I often thought that the mutilation and sex with some animal, a chicken, perhaps a horse...oh, I have mutilated chickens before. I have longed to kill a larger beast. I have thought of disembowling an elephant, of climbing into the stinking maw, of disappearing down the gateway of its entrails into a dark, foetid space, where flesh and death and decay are all...one."

The doctor was scribbling furiously, his face a bland, placid mask. In front of him the polymorphous pervert was chewing reflectively on his own words, lost in the reverie of this pseudo-religious confession. Of course, he knew the man was enjoying this on some sexual level, probably exulting, inwardly, at the vicarious thrill of confession. Perhaps, this was how one brain, albeit a diseased one, reached out to another. By sharing

the sordid sins inherent in a warped psychology.

“So, when these urges would commence, when they would come upon you, did you act upon them. I mean, did you feel compelled to live them out, or was it enough to merely fantasize?”

The man smiled, a hideous grin of large, yellowed teeth, a death’s head expression that knew no comfort or warmth, and no mirth or merriment that was decipherable by any human agency.

“No. I mutilated birds once. That was satisfactory, but, in fear of being found out, I was forced to stop. I suppose the supreme joy of my life would be to kill, to acquire the body of some young woman, to seize her and keep her until she manifested a very advanced stage of decay. Oh! The screams of a woman are a supreme thrill to me, like music to my tortured ears, like the strains of a violin concerto.”

The doctor raised his eyebrows.

“The sound of womens’ screams...excites you?”

The hideous, elderly face turned upward into a rictus of pleasure at the mere suggestion.

“Oh, it is supreme joy to me! To think that the eternal object of fixation, forever close as the forefront of my fevered brain, forever dancing away like the tormented flame of a flickering candle; to have them really, truly in my possession, to know they are perched upon that precipice, leaning into the confines of a dark, and eternal sleep...”

“You’re a very poetic man, if you don’t

mind me saying,” commented the doctor in a dry, and matter-of-factly tone.

“I’ve had my entire life to sit in the darkness, to brood, to ponder; to increase my store of words. I could write reams of poetry to putrid artifice. I could paint your eardrums pink and purple with syllibafication, with profusions of loveliness, extolling the virtues of piety and goodness and warmth. I am no such thing; it would amount to a gross misrepresentation of what and who I am, were you to believe that. I am instead a sucking black emptiness, a void, something that desires to be filled, a pit; a grave in which to fill with dirt. I desire a dead thing because I am dead, because we can find an affinity with eachother, I and my corpses.

“My sister? I can see her still, standing there, her hands on her hips, her thighs partly spread. Her womanhood glistened for me, and she offered herself to me, saying ‘If it will cure you of this monstrous urge, I will give you my cunt. You can have me, any time you desire.’ And, because I have never seen her, and can only imagine the contours of her small, fleshy face, her flabby rear end, her pendulous rolls of fat or her drooping dugs, I went ahead and tried. Alas! It was to no avail. I could not complete the act, even with the additional thrill of realizing I was making love to my own sister.

In truth, after we tried it, she arose from the bed, sighed, and said to me, in a tone so matter-of-factly it verged on the strangely comic, ‘It is obvious you are a failure in this as well. You

must only have love for your corpses, only be able to make love to the dead. Such a man will only bring disgrace down upon himself, and his family. You should do the honorable thing, and take your own life.’ And with that, the limp, flabby little puppet left the room, as if nothing more transpired between us than a common disagreement as to what to have for dinner. Her dinner was, apparently, to be me. Unsatisfied by this, she simply swept the matter under the rug.

“I still dream of cutting horses. If you kill a person, it is murder. Kill a horse, and, as long as you are discrete about it, there is no trouble.”

15. History

We have already alluded to Herod, Out-Heroding himself by having the body of Mariamne preserved, legend has it, in a vat of honey. It was after this he commenced sexual relations with her dead body for seven years after (we must assume until, finally, putrefaction rendered the completion of sexual congress impossible. Also: just how does one preserve a body in honey, anyway?)

Greek tyrant Periander, responsible for the castration of thousands of boys—creating a sub-race of eunuchs perhaps—was reported to have slain a wife, and enjoyed sexual relations with her body afterward. Perhaps this is simply the result of historical propaganda; but, knowing what we already know of Periander, can we doubt he would

commence such a black action?

We could go on and on with these historical anecdotes. Mad Queen Joan of Castile was said to have kept the corpse of her love, Philip the Handsome, near to her, kissing and weeping over the casket. She acted as if he was simply sleeping, and would awake at any time. Eventually, having entered a nunnery, she was said to have spent many nights in an adjacent cemetery, so she could be near the remains of her departed love. Similarly, revolutionary Christina Trivulzio Belgioso, upon fleeing during the war between Austria and Italy, was found to have the body of her love Stelzi hidden away in a secret wardrobe. Or perhaps this was the clever propaganda of counter-revolutionary forces.

History records that in 1827, Leger, a Frenchman with a suspiciously German-sounding name, killed and drank the blood of a young girl. He also commenced an act of necrophilia.

In 1890, in Bieniac, in St. Malmo, France, a woman died during a climb to her attic. Her psychotic son, suddenly seized by the very devil of perversity, reached through her cunt into her bowels, thrusting his hand inside her to the forearm, and pulling out the ropy entrails. He then commenced an act of necrosodomy on the supine and badly-mutilated cadaver of his mother, waking up beside her in utter amazement when discovered. Found with the intestines of his mother-fuck thrown over his shoulder. What can one say about such mad compulsions?

Our blind necrophile nurtured a peculiar

fantasy:

I want a tall, fat woman. Very plump and round, with massive thighs and heavy pendulous breasts. I want to take her corpse with me to have and to hold. I want to keep her long enough to fill her up with water, drop by drop. This should bring about a state of rapid decay.

Once, you know, I was attendant upon the death of a child. The sister and mother were at the bedside, weeping madly over the little thing. I was a witness to all of this, I swear it, and I'll swear it before the courts of heaven. Or Hell.

I asked them kindly, 'When she dies, can I drink her blood?' To this they replied slowly, not seeming to fully understand what I said. I thought it would be impolitick to repeat myself, so instead I explained, rather hastily, 'She...after all, won't be needing it anymore.'

When she finally breathed her last, the body was bound up and taken away in a carriage. I felt a huge well of sadness roll up within me, like the unquiet breakers of a tempestuous

wave. I began to run down the rutted, dirt pathway, my arms flailing in the air, my heart hammering and throbbing within my chest.

'Take me with you!' I implored.
'Please, I want to go with you as well!' Alas, they could not hear me over the rattle-clatter of the carriage wheels. No one could hear me. No one has ever heard me.

Going back further in time, we could bring up a little drama starring Sir Johnathan Pryce:

"Ah my dear, now we have had our nuptials, tied the matrimonial knot, and have settled into our new life of domesticity and bon homie. You shall find that I am a dutiful husband; and you, I trust, shall make an obedient wife. But the evening draws late; the long day wanes, and the sun is dipping low over yonder horizon. Come! Let us repair to the sanctity of our marriage bed. You shall find it...ah, a tight squeeze, perhaps. But, warm and inviting, nonetheless."

He leads the newly wed bride to the nuptial chamber, a candle flickering in his hand as they cross the threshold. The bed is a large four-post oaken thing from three hundred years previous. In the bed, two mouldering corpses have refused to draw flies, liquidity spent, discernible features

erased until all that is left is the jolly death's head. The child bride puts her hands to her face, attempting to come to grips with what she is seeing. Is she dreaming? The full horror of the image brings reality into stark, new contrast, darkening the darks, brightening the brights, and freeing this moment forever in time, in her mind.

"You see, these are my other wives. Died the first so young, I couldn't possibly let her go. No, if we are both to grow old, you see, we must do so together, in the sanctity of the marriage bed that God has seen fit to lend us as the vessel through the stormy seas of this life of toil and woe.

"Now, this little one you see next to her. Well, I had to have a wife, hadn't I? So she sufficed. Cooking and cleaning and keeping house for me, as best as such a tenderling was able. Then, one day, cut from the broadcloth of existence as if she had been a weary, ragged patch. But, I hadn't the heart to bury her, and here, as you see, is her final repose. Now—"

And he makes as if to slip beneath the sheets. The newlywed bride raises a scream from her thin, heaving bosom, before running from the

room in terror and disgust. But Monsieur Pryce is not certain, exactly, what the trespass upon reason and decency could possibly have been.

The wife of Periander, tyrant of ancient Corinth, was brought back from the black halls of Tartarus, called forth by the magics of the castrating king, to be the recipient of post-mortem affections. Achilles fell upon his Amazonian enemy, after divesting her of helm and discovering she was, in point of fact, a most desirable woman. He ravished her corpse in a fit of frenzy.

Truly, then, he “loved the dead.” But perhaps for all the wrong reasons.

Soldiers are known to have recourse to “warm necrophilia” on the battlefield: i.e. , they rape the still-warm bodies of enemy combatants, but this is perhaps an aggressive and barbaric summoning from the atavistic soul of a man who has slipped from the precipice of civility into the yawning chasm of barbarity. Or, simply a way to show animalistic dominance, to destroy the sanctity of an enemy completely, to render him a non-entity, something to be used and discarded like a commodity.

Henri Blot, the true “lover of corpses,” was convicted of mutilating the body of a ballerina. A tiny tot, perhaps he wondered at her lack of physical articulation now that she had shuffled off the mortal coil. Perhaps he posed her like an oversized, puterfying doll. (Note: Anatoly Moskovin did just this.)

Victor Ardisson wondered at the lack of

meaningful dialog with his personal collection of various severed heads. He must have lovingly kissed them.

Jean Baptiste, a legendary character from the history of Salt Lake City, Utah, was branded and shipped to an island as punishment or exile. We assume he was meant to stay put there, regardless of the fact that his open-air prison was particularly subject to egress for all but the captive. When two prospectors went a-roaming one day, perhaps looking to catch a glimpse of the lonely graverobber as he sojourned across one rocky, barren strip of the island, a forlorn figure gathering long shadows in the sullen gloom.

But HE WAS NOT THERE.

Perhaps the Dead stole him away; perhaps he heard their sacred calling, their shift in the earth's festering core. perhaps this macabre tattoo summoned him, like a man penetrating the membranous fold dividing this world and the next, to cross over, to become *one*.

Or, maybe he just grew tired of waiting. At any rate, he vanished, his unsettled spirit said to haunt the dirty gravel beaches of the little isle of his imprisonment. Marked, he was—in both the physical and spiritual sense.

Out—out are the lights—out all!
And, over each quivering form,
The curtain, a funeral pall,
Comes down with the rush of a storm,
And the angels, all pallid and wan,
Uprising, unveiling, affirm

That the play is the tragedy, "Man,"
And its hero the Conqueror Worm.

—Edgar Allan Poe

The body is a sacred vessel, the putrefying gateway to the kingdom of death. In its dissolution and decay can be seen a microcosm of all the mysteries of creation, of the beginning and end of TIME, of the unwinding of the Eternal Clock, of the otherwise inscrutable Will and logic of God. Jonah festered in the belly of a whale; a madman once expressed the desire to fall through space and time by entering the mutilated carcass of an elephant. It's all the same; the flesh is a portal to a forbidden world, a starting point, divided from spirit but inextricably bound over to it, as a prison, a cocoon of the conscious self-awareness of man.

We suppose we should end it at the neighborhood necropolis. The IOOF cemetery in Marion, Indiana, a place where your feet sink into the sod in the old burying grounds, where the tiniest little headstones lie weathered and forgotten beneath the slanting rays of the sometimes trickling Midwestern sun. Here they have reposed, for time out of mind, their children and grandchildren and great grand children, nad great-great great grandchildren having forgotten them. One blood flowing into the other. "In the rooms the women come and go," said T.S. Eliot.

This place is centered in a sort of dip, past a railroad, flanked by stone buildings selling funeral monuments, and abutting the sloping hills and rows of elderly Midwestern houses receding into

the old neighborhoods where once I walked with childish tread.

Tick, tock, tick, tock...time goes by.

A necropolis, a “city of the dead.” That is what this place was and is. A sacred space for the preservation of memory; a place where the dead can gather, under the yawning crevice of the night, to have their tea. To bide their time; to make their memories. Upon the hill, the mausoleum beckons—

In the rooms, the women come and go—

They hold to us, as much as we hold on to them. They require that we remember, that we reanimate them, day by day, night after sacred night, in the mental space of your memories and fantasies. Our aunts and uncles, cousins, brothers, sisters, our mothers and fathers—alive to us evermore in that necropolis that every thinking, sentient man carries around with him in his own heart. Where is that brittle, faded photo? Who loves?

A girl I once knew hung herself. At her funeral, another girl, who was her friend, looked into the yawning eggshell of the casket, that place where the festering fragments of the body lie in repose, in airtight somnolence, until such time as the worms and the elements render them meaningless; an ideogram of dry bones, a relic from an ancient world.

“That’s not her, that’s not her,” she seemed to whisper over and over again, according to my friend. She suddenly burst into tears, running from the funeral home viewing room. What did she see there, that was not “her”? What did her mind tell

her she should view, waiting in the larval state, in the sepulchral cocoon, to impregnate the grave? Was it the "fast-decaying image" of something young and loved, and desired. I once carried this young lady's picture. What image is imprinted on my subconscious mind as I lie down to sleep with her ghost, as I fuck her vicariously in my fantasies and fears, tracing her bright white smile in ghostly pencil.

What is this ghost that haunts our fantasies and dreams? Wherein lies the soul beneath the skin of remembrance? If someone has communicated with us, from the Other Side, in a dream perhaps, is it that they fail to realize they are even dead?

16.

"I'm Getting Ready for You."

"In my dreams she still does haunt me,
Broken garments soaked in brine,
Though in life I use to hug her,
In death I draw the line."

--From "Clementine" (Traditional American
Folk Ballad)

We started writing this book in 2015. That year, our friends and idols began to die. The idols, famous musicians such as Lemmy Kilmister from the hard rock band Motorhead, and rock and roll icon David Bowie, each had, in their turn, the sort

of easily-identifiable visage that guaranteed them wax effigies at Madame Tussaud's. Indeed. one can scarcely think of them as having died at all. Much like James Dean, Marilyn, Elvis, even Evita Peron, they can be called forth, summoned, through the magic of the electronic media, through this vast, living neural network of memory available at the punch of a few keyboard keys. We can hear their voices, see their images, become entranced by their immortal, deathless incorruptible beauty like the photos of silent film actresses I compulsively collect on the internet, on Facebook, every day.

But these people are long-gone cadavers. We can make love to them, cherishing their young, strong bodies--but we can never have them or hold them, except in the retina of the mind's eye, in the strange interplay between our deepest, most effecting fantasies, and our quandry as biological servitors of a callous, unromantic fate.

And so we are a race of Virtual Necrophiles.

I could only have written this book at this time in my life. I have been close to death recently, up close and personal. It has come into my home, sat on my fantasies, sucked up my happy thoughts, stoked the fires of my fear and despair.

I watched my grandfather die one night a few months ago. It was in a hospital bed, hooked to a machine monitoring his steadily fading vitals, after a massive cardiac arrest. He was eighty-four, with a "Living Will" directive that he NOT be resuscitated. He was surrounded by his entire family as he went, slowly, inexorably, all of us

waiting and praying; assured, of course, by the doctor, that he was beyond hope of any recovery. And we knew this to be true.

But we were also assured that he could hear us surrounding him; children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren.

He could hear us, the doctor claimed; but he could not communicate from out of that dying husk, that shell of a being that had housed his consciousness for eighty-four years of life. His face was a hideous mask of suspension; he was not the robust old man I had seen a week or two before, and had assumed may live for, at the very least, a few more years.

In my mind, musician Gene Kauer's theme from the old documentary *Faces of Death* (1978) played in my mind. (And, now, I cannot listen to that particular piece of music anymore.)

My grandmother is said to have said: "Bill's sick. He'll be dead by this weekend." She was right of course. And, also, she herself would be dead by Monday morning.

He died, finally, the monitor finally reading that his heart had stopped. We all stood, a solemn moment of tears. Curiously, I felt detached; dream-like; I knew I was at one of those integral turning points in life that would change everything. The last few months have not proved me wrong.

Again, I tell you: I could only have finished this book at this time.

It was seventy-two hours later, nearly, that grandma also died.

I was woken up by a phone call from my mother at around five in the morning, April 1st. It was cold, icy; still dark and silent. By the light of an LED lamp I went into the living room.

"Your grandma is dying."

I had not expected this. On the wall, in my new apartment, are wall hangings depicting the Hindu gods Shiva and Kali. Time and Destruction and Death, deified. To me, simply symbols. (I also have Krishna, two Krishnas, hanging on each side of the room.)

("I am become Death, destroyer of worlds, and I have come here to destroy all peoples." So Lord Krishna, in *Bhagavad-gita* chapter 11, verse 32, proclaims to Arjuna. This is a slight paraphrase, but it is also, reportedly, what Oppenheimer himself proclaimed at Trinity during the first test of the atomic bomb. Oppenheimer would, most certainly, qualify for Fromm as a "Necrophilious Personality." Or, at least, one supposes.)

My mother and I went out to scrape ice and snow from the car (as of this writing, we both live in the same apartment complex). As I was scraping ice and snow off of the back window, my mother turned and, her face screwed up into a rictus of shock, said "She's gone!"

The nursing home had just called. She died, joining my grandfather three days later; amazingly on TIME.

The cause, in her case, was pulmonary fibrosis.

This Thursday would be her eighty-third birthday.

I can still see her sitting at a piano in my mind's eye, with sunlight streaming in through the front window, playing those old gospel hymns. Time is a damnable, maleable thing.

Their house, wherein we spent so many Christmas celebrations, and had so many dinners and even lived for a short period, was boarded-up, long ago; it lies cold and dripping, an abandoned derelict with ghosts of ages haunting its memories. MY memories.

("In my dreams, she still does haunt me...")

In my dreams it is thirty years ago. It is Sunday, and we are standing out in front of that house, on a sunny day, hearing church bells in the distance. Granpa is dressed for Sunday Service. Life IS.

Somewhere down the road, is the old church, the empty church. Vermin-infested also, boarded-up and empty. "I am become TIME, destroyer of worlds, and I have come here to destroy ALL people..."

Is there anything so eerie as an empty church?

I walked into the nursing home room and saw an aunt sitting by the bed. On the bed, my grandmother, who had baked cakes and cookies after we got home from school, and made lunch, and so on and so forth...lie there, her face a mask of confusion and pain, a rictus of final bewilderment at the strange, inscrutable nature of life and death. Perhaps she had gone to her God.

Or, perhaps, she would be reborn; perhaps she would wander the nursing home hallways in delirium, unable to grasp the enormity of the change she had just gone through. Needing a "spirit rescue," perhaps, as the Spiritualists call it. (For personal reasons, I think the latter possibility to be a likely development.)

So that was the end. We immediately started going through the belongings, as both grandparents were now dead. A jar of foot powder that belonged to my grandfather set off a cying spell for me. My aunt and my mother were more restrained. It was not yet daybreak.

The man from the funeral home got there not long after, and the body was put upon a gurney, zipped tight into a bag, and wheeled away. He was dressed in a suit, as I remember, and he seemed still a little sleepy. It was all routine.

As he zipped up the bag, I remember thinking that, as a child, I could never have conceived of this being the last vision I would ever have of grandma. In my head, that same Gene Kauer theme from *Faces of Death*, that morbid, funereal piece of elevator music, played incessantly.

A month later, I was having a heart catheterization as part of a series of tests for an unrelated, corrective plastic surgery. Upon awakening, I was told, by a smiling physician, that I had had an eighty-percent blockage in the most serious artery, the Left Anterior Descending, the fabled and dreaded "Widowmaker."

"But I fixed it!" he said, smiling.

This meant little to me at the time. A short time later, I would begin to realize just how serious this could have been. This is the origin of the "Widowmaker" heart attack. If this had been allowed to progress, I could have been working out and suffered a massive coronary at the gym. And went and joined Granpa and Grandma.

Frightened, but not overly so, I began to return to my old weightlifting routine. I had a huge crisis a short while later, though, which forever estranged me from a close relative. I began I feel, as a result, to suffer panic attacks.

I began to constantly have the symptoms of a heart attack. I took several ambulance trips to emergency, always to be hooked up to wires and machines. always pronounced as stable, as there being nothing wrong. Yes, I had coronary artery disease, but I was not and did not, yet have a heart attack.

Yet, I continue to have the same spells. A re-catheterization also pronounced me as completely fine, just, with "a lot of anxiety," as the physician explained. Fine.

Yet I continued to have those symptoms.

Heart palpitations. Dizziness. Feeling faint. Sweating. Worst of all, angina...and an impending sense of doom. Staring into the double-barrel of my own mortality. In the back of my mind, considering how much has happened in the past few months, how it seems, at times, as if I am standing outside myself watching a movie of someone else's life unfold, I wonder if I still am so

staring. Deja-vu haunts me. All of this current life seems familiar, as if I beheld it in some long-ago, half-forgotten dream.

But I have been assured my chances of NOT dying at this time are excellent. Also, that returning to weightlifting is relatively safe for me.

The ambulance ride I took two months ago was one I shall never forget. I thought I was in my "casket on wheels," at that point.

I had been to emergency with chest pains, shortness of breath, dizziness. The surgeon that placed the original stent was going to see me at a particular hospital in the morning. To that end, the EMTs were called in, and they were going to take me by ambulance to a hospital in a distant city.

They strapped me onto a gurney, wheeled me into the ambulance. It was two women EMTs and a male driver. We set off, and I began to chant the Maha Mantra. ("Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna, Krishna, Hare, Hare. Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama, Rama, Hare Hare.")

My heart began to race dangerously. The heart rate went above two hundred. Or so I believe I heard one of the women say, and they both began to seem very, very worried.

I white-knuckled the rails of the gurney, still chanting, now finally praying for God to forgive me of the sins of my past life. The women moved about over me, I informing them of whenever a new bout of fluttering heart beats would lave me terrified.

"Here it comes again!"

I said between prayers.

"He's too unstable to take to St. Joseph's!
We're going to have to take him to Lutheran!"

The driver turned on the sirens and
flashers. The one woman standing over me, a
woman I shall NEVER forget, taped shock pads to
my chest. In case my heart stopped.

Her words have indelibly seared my soul:

"I'm getting ready for you," she said.

In truth, she could have been a guardian
standing at the Gates of Death. Her words have
taken on an ominous, cryptic significance in the
two months since that time. *I'm getting ready for
you.*

Is she? Ready for what, pray tell?

A recent dream had me holding, in the
clasp of my hands, the pudgy, smiling and beatific
round face of an aunt. I am not close to this
woman.

We were framed as if I were looking down
on her from Heaven. It was a foreign art-cinema
shot from an ancient, expressionist film. The
subtitles here must remain obscure.

"When you die," I explained, "you crack the
Cosmic Egg. And, outside, reality as we experience
is stark, void, and nothing will come with you, after
that rebirth. Inside is the material world, left just
beyond where, like a baby chick, the eternal,
ineffable stuff which is YOU emerges."

And she seems unconvinced,. So I tell her:

"God did not create the Universe. The
Universe created God."

This morning I woke up thinking about Clementine. The little girl in the traditional folk ballad. Neil Young's version I love. I can play the song on guitar. And frequently do.

The song is about a "Miner 49er" and has comic touches, describing him living in a cave, a mine shaft, with his daughter, who wears, "herring boxes without topses" for shoes. Every morning about nine she "drove ducklings to the water." Then, one sad morning, she "hit her foot against a splinter, fell into the brine..."

Alas, the miner could not swim, thus "ruby lips above the water, blew bubbles soft and fine..." But Clementine, of course, drowned.

"Oh my darling, oh my darling Clementine!
You are lost and gone forever, precious darling
Clementine!"

Of course, that is the all-too familiar refrain. Clementine becomes a ghost that haunts the miner, beckoning him to an early grave, a suicide. One can see her little wet corpse, "robed in garments, soaked in brine," beckoning to the miner from the mouth of a canyon, from the mouth of an old barn, from everywhere his eye should fall, and a tear should spill as his broken heart weeps.

Her voice is a whisper of wind, "down in the valley, so low..." An ancient ghost story from the American West. A folk ballad of death and despair.

"In my dreams, she still does haunt me,
Robed in garments soaked in brine,

Though in life I use to hug her,
In death I draw the line."

The listener of the song may well become confused as to who is speaking here, since we have already been told by the balladeer that the miner has "left with Clementine." She is described as feeding the creepers and vines in the churchyard. She must have fed the balladeers haunted dreams of a love lost forever, to the cold grasp of unyielding death.

Perhaps he sat with a gun in his lap, a guitar in his hand, composing his sad, sorry tale. As he did, maybe he heard Clementine, like a whisper on the wind, or saw her shadow, long and stretched to hilarious lengths in the darkening Western twilight.

17. Eulogy

The superstitions of medieval peasants, coupled with the superstitious ignorance proffered by the all-powerful, burn-the-witch-at-the-stake Church, gave rise to notions that Incubi and Succubi borrowed the bodies of cadavers with which to rape the putatively unwilling victims of their nocturnal sexual assaults. In an ironic sense, a comical song I recorded many, many years ago, "They Sometimes Commit an Act of Reverse Necrophilia", (positing an army of horny zombies, risen from the grave to rape the living), follows the same theme.

We could give you a few modern examples as a way to conclude this book, a few more contemporary anecdotes. Occasionally, as in the case of a woman in Belgium, an elderly person will fail to report the death of the long-cherished, beloved spouse. That body may be with them for years, although whether they try to preserve it or not, as in the case of Von Cosel, is another matter. Usually, no real attempt at preserving the stiff is made, and the dessicated, mummified husk may be found lying in a repulsive and sickening bed, with the aggrieved, if psychotic, widow.

A young man from Teaneck, New Jersey, Mr. Anthony Merino, was a struggling young hospital attendant working two jobs, helping to care for his mother, who had Alzheimer's Disease, and his father, who was stricken with colon cancer.

By every report he seemed normal, likable; a good, conscientious hard worker, and a devoted son.

On October 28th of 2007, however, he was, apparently having a rare moment. He asked a security guard if he could go into the morgue, borrow the keys and get in there so he could collect some "specimens." It was not the collecting of specimens, however, he was going to be going about: it was the leaving of his own specimen which was, chiefly, at the forefront of his rather unique thought processes.

The guard, granting Mr. Merino's request, suddenly began to suspicion that something was not quite right. He went into the morgue and got

an horrific eyeful.

Mr. Merino was having sex with the cadaver of a ninety-one year old woman. When the guard summoned additional help to sundue the amorous, if perverted young technician, he was busily in the act of, frantically, trying to wash his penis.

He pleaded guilty to desecration of human remains. In New Jersey, apparently, this carries a long sentence, even if it is mere abuse of someone who is already dead. Mr. Merino was sentenced to seven years.

Even stranger and more ironic is the case of morgue attendant Kenneth Douglas. Here, the nightmare scenario plays out like something from a bad piece of black humor, like the "art imitating life" of an urban legend with a basis in fact.

Serial murderer and door-to-door "salesman" (Of what, one wonders) David Steffan was invited into the home of one ill-starred young woman named Karen Range, who lived in Cincinnati, Ohio. He bludgeoned her, cutting the throat until the head was nearly severed from the neck. Why he did this--his driving, bestial motivation--is anyone's guess.

Semen was found, unsurprisingly, in the body. However, the surprising howls of protest from the convicted sex slayer was that, in point of fact, he had NOT Raped the body of Karen Range. Nobody in 1982 believed him. It would be twenty-six years before DNA would prove that the man, who was currently languishing on Death Row, although a twisted killer, was, in point of fact, NOT

a rapist.

The morgue attendant at the time, one hulking, unappealing individual named Kenneth Douglas, was often described by his wife as coming home from his job as a morgue attendant, stripping down, and "reeking of sex and alcohol." Which is not a description we find especially appetizing. (It should be remembered that Tanzler washed with whiskey in a house "with no running water," after disinterring the body of Elena.)

When she called his supervisors to complain of her suspicions, she was told, curtly that "county business was of no concern to her." Or, something along those lines.

Mr. Douglas left his job at the morgue in 1992. But that wasn't the end of the story. Not by a long shot.

In 2008, while running a check of his DNA based on a drug violation, a match came back positive. Douglas's semen was in Range's body.

Douglas had been the morgue attendant. And, hence, he was indicted for "gross abuse of a corpse." He plead no contest, and was sentenced to three years.

Four years later, his semen was likewise found in the body of a woman who had died from falling from a third-story window. Ditto another murder victim, a woman who had been strangled.

In time, Mr. Douglas confessed to having performed sexual acts on over ONE HUNDRED corpses during his tenure at the Hamilton County Morgue.

Hamilton County, incidentally, coughed up

around eight hundred thousand dollars in damages to the relatives of these three women.

Now...

Because we are exhausted, and because this is, easily, one of the most fascinating examples of a necrophilous romantic that we have recently come across, we can recount, briefly and finally, the strange case of a Russian corpse-lover.

A man from the large Russian city of Nizhny Novgorod, an intellectual professor, philologist, researcher and writer, began to form a terrible, longing fixation for an idealized past. What's more, because of his inherent schizophrenia, he managed to confuse this fantasy world with his real-life longing for companionship, his eternal quest to stave off loneliness.

An erudite thinker, he had translated works from Russian, contributed to Russian-English phrasebooks and dictionaries, and wrote for local papers as well as a journal called *Necrologies*, which curiously covered cemeteries and the celebrity dead. He roamed old Russian graveyards in the city, when not teaching his courses, a lonely, wraithw-like figure. He lived with elderly parents who, unbelievable, had no idea what his ever-growing collection of oversized "dollies" actually were.

They were, in fact, twenty-six mummified cadavers, ranging in the ages between three and the early twenties. He had exhumed them, like Ed Gein before him, and carried them home. Like the famous American Tazler, he had painstakingly

preserved them in strips of cloth, covered in paraffin or wax, with glass eyes and wigs, painted them like cute little dollies; clothed them, put strange items and articles in their chest cavities.

(Note: The preceding information reminds me of a strange dream from many years ago. I was standing, pool-side, amidst what seemed to be a swimming class comprised of young girls. At one end of the pool, a female instructor was teaching first aid lessons, or CPR, or some sort of medical lesson to the girls. In front of her, a rubber mannequin of a young girl, an oversized dolly, like what this Russian man, whose name is Anatoly Moskovin, kept proudly on display in his home. Inside the hollow chest cavity of the mannequin-thing, I take it, was a first aid kit, inflatable pontoon, emergency blanket, rations; peculiar.)

One item stuffed inside Moskovin's "dollies" was a music box, so that the dead thing emitted a tinkling melody when touched.

Other curious items were pieces of gravestones, buttons and keepsakes the dollies were wearing, often the clothes they had been buried in. Moskovin attached button eyes to many, so they could "watch cartoons" with him. (Note: One is reminded of Victor Ardisson's talking to his severed head collection, as if for company. Crossing the boundary, as it were, between reality and psychotic delusion.)

And so his corpse gallery, Moskovin's Dollies, stood around his reeking apartment in suspended animation; waiting, perhaps, for Judgement Day and Resurrection.

Moskovin admitted to wanting to keep them for a time when science might eventually defeat death, and bring his morbid collection back to a hideous semblance of reanimated life.

We must stress that this was a man who spoke thirteen languages, whose intelligence was quite above average. He was a published author, and generally conceded as an expert on cemeteries by local newspapers and journals. He referred to himself as a "necrolyst."

His apprehension by Russian authorities was due to suspecting desecration of Muslim cemeteries by extremist groups. Caught in the act of exhuming his decaying angels, he was later sentenced to time in a psychiatric institution.

19. Epitaph

"I kissed her once, then again, then again."

Anatoly Moskovin, as a young boy, was forced to marry a corpse. Or, so he claims.

A grieving Russian funeral procession passed the boy on the road. The men quickly dragged the frightened boy over to the opened coffin, in which lie the beautiful but deceased body of Natasha Petrova.

"Kiss her!" the men commanded.

Reluctantly, his fear mixing with fascination, he bent to do so. "Oh, my poor dear! You shall be wed to her in death, though she could not be your wife while alive!"

This was said by a grieving old woman

Anatoly took to be the mother. Coming forward, she thrust a ring upon Anatoly's finger. And then, she placed the other ring, a cheap, brass thing to be sure, on the dead finger of Natasha Petrova.

Hence, he was married now to to the dead girl.

On his lips, he could taste the ashen hue of her slowly rotting flesh, feel the icy rubber of her lips. He could taste death on his tongue, feel himself grow hot and excited--but, it was a perplexing feeling.

Death fucked you and robbed you in equal measure. It held out the electrifying promise of a New Reality, and slammed you, then, against the wall of a dark tomorrow. And how to defeat Him, finally?

Anatoly grew to believe in magick; in madness and the mystery of *le morte*.

Dear Reader, we have not penned this tome to, exhaustively, track down every psychopath with a "taste for corpses." Nor is it simply an exercise in morbid titillation or ghoulish horror; no.

We have penned it to understand. To know. To rehearse our own mortality through the prismatic lens of sepulchral minds, those who swam in the churning, brackish waters of dripping decay--for those who held on, when they should have let go. For the outsiders, the Little Men, who could only form attachments to an inert mass of tissue they could imbue with a new, hideous half-life.

To those who heard the siren wail, and

closed their eyes to "lie down with death," their bride.

To the misfits and the lurking shadows, the human ghosts; the maniacs, seers, flotsam and jetsam, fleshly mediums; and, well, to...the "Men Who Loved the Dead."

This book is for all of us, on our way.
In Pace Requiscat.

Appendix A

The Noxious Nuptials of Mad Sir John

Note: What follows is a brief article, first published at the website Vocal, recounting the legendary history of corpse-collector Mad Sir Johnathan Pryce.

We want to tell a little tale here. One that, really, we only know the bare bones concerning. (And there is really no humor intended by that first line. But, there is irony.)

Sir Johnathan Pryce, we take it, was a fellow that lived long, long ago (maybe 400 years), in a little place that was once known as Merry Old England. Today, it is less Merry, and, according to some, much less England. But, you understand where and approximately when, I take it.

Mr. Sir John, whom we know nothing about, married, three times, having been unaccountably widowed twice. We do not know how he, specifically, became a double widower,

but, really, trust us on this one. (You do trust us, don't you?)

Mad Sir, upon losing his first wife, decided... well, he just couldn't part with the old gal. To that end, he exhumed her still lovely (but undeniably dead) body, and plopped it next to him in bed. Like an oversized, if somewhat repulsive, teddy bear.

Well, Cupid rides his white horse across the landscape of all our lives now and again, somewhat erratically choosing who and when and where, and all that. But the arrows he flings find their mark, and Mad Sir was duly pierced and found himself, once again, walking the aisle in nuptial bliss.

His new, blushing bride must have been a little loath to crawl into bed beside Mad Sir and his dead first wife, who was still occupying her space in the conjugal boudoir; but, wives being the dutiful creatures they were in those bygone days, she eventually complied. Charming.

Of course, the exegesis of Fate's inscrutable "Book of Life and Death" is a perplexing matter; thus, when Wife Number Two slipped from her perch with the living to join the Invisible Throng, Sir John the Mad decided since, well, the old girl was still at least *looking* as if she were a Spring rose ripe for the plucking, he would keep her, in the increasingly crowded bed, beside the undeniably now putrescent and repellent Wife Number One.

As snug, they must have been, as three bugs in a rug.

We can surmise that Sir John the Mad was a real "knockabout Don Juan...a Nut..." to borrow a

phrase from the "Elephant Man" essay by Sir. Frederick Treves. Bloody rake hell he must have been, because it was not long before Wife Number THREE was walking down the aisle with him. Unsuspecting, of course, that bedtime at the Pryce household constituted an altogether unique arrangement.

We can well-imagine the resultant scene. Most likely, it was like something from a cheap horror thriller:

"Come my dear, come! I want you to meet two very special ladies. You see here, Katherine! Ah, dear, sweet Katherine. The pox took her in 1652. Such a lovely face! Such radiant eyes! Her cheekbones, were they not the most delicate, the most high, and most beautiful of all her features? Now, beside her lies Deborah! Oh, lovely Deborah, an angel upon Earth. You see her hands? Oh, they're a bit rotted by now, the fingernails look as if they have grown long and haggard; but, I can assure, that's simply because the skin of the fingers has receded due to time and decay. Oh, these damn flies! Never fear, they clear out after awhile. And, of course, I'm certain you're not use to the odor, the sweet nectar of their bodies, their natural, too-human perfume.

You see? I have spread these posies
around, to mask the stench. You'll
get use to it soon enough..."

The horrified Wife Number Three raises her
quivering hands to her cheeks, a scream dying in
her throat. Suddenly, able to countenance the
horror no longer, she turns and flees from the
room, from the house, from her new husband and
his two moldering keepsakes.

"What?" he asks himself. "Was it something
I said?"

Occasionally, the death of an elderly person
will go unreported by their spouse, due to senility
or dementia. And, also, some people just find
themselves unable to "let go." When discovered, it
is found they have been living with the
decomposing body of their departed spouse,
sometimes for quite a long time.

Happy coming Halloween.
Nighty nightmare.

Appendix B
From
the "Confessions of Francois Bertrand
".

"When I was 7 or 8 years old, my parents
noticed that I was inclined to a special
maladjustment that drove me to go for walks in
the darker spots of woods, where I stayed for

entire days in absolute sadness.

On the 23rd or 25th of February 1847, a strange kind of fury seized me and made me do the things for which I was arrested. Here is how it happened. One day, I went for a walk in the country with one of my friends when we came by a cemetery; we entered it, to satisfy our curiosity. Someone had been buried the day before; the undertaker, surprised by rain, had not finished covering the grave and had left his tools on the ground. When I saw this, I was overcome with gloomy thoughts. I suffered from a violent headache; my heart got carried away and I couldn't control myself anymore. I gave my friend the excuse that I had to go back to town immediately and when I got rid of him, I went back to the graveyard. I picked up a shovel and I started to dig the grave. When I finally removed the corpse from its tomb, I started to hit it with the shovel, driven by a rage I cannot explain. But a worker suddenly appeared at the cemetery's gate. I stood up, but then I saw no one. The man had gone to alert the authorities. I climbed out of the grave, and after re-covering the corpse with dirt, I jumped over the graveyard's wall...

Four months had passed since this happened. In the meantime, I stayed quiet; we had come back to Paris, and I believed that my madness had disappeared completely when my friends invited me to come and visit the Pere-Lachaise cemetery.

I enjoyed the dark alleys of this graveyard quite a bit, and I decided to come back for a walk

during the night. I entered into the cemetery at 9 PM by climbing the wall. I strolled around for half an hour, my mind filled with black thoughts, then I started to dig a grave with my bare hands; I tore the body into pieces, then I left. It happened in June.

Then came the February 1848 cases. At this period, the regiment started to go on the road, and we only came back in Paris in June. We were camping near a village in the suburbs of Amiens, so I only came back to Paris on the 17th of July. After a few days of rest, the sickness came back, more violent than ever. We were staying in the Ivry Camp; at night, the guards were posted very near and their instructions were very severe, but nothing could stop me. I climbed out of the camp every night, to go to the Montparnasse Cemetery, where I satisfied my lust.

The first victim of my fury was a young girl whose limbs I scattered after having mutilated her. This desecration took place on July 25, 1848. Ever since then, I only came back twice to that cemetery. The first time, at midnight, under a bright moon, I saw a guard walking down an alley, a pistol in his hand. I was perched on a tree, near the surrounding wall, ready to climb down into the graveyard; he walked by me, but did not see me. When he was far enough from me, I left without even trying to do a thing. The second time, I dug up the remains of an old woman and a child; I treated them the same way as my other victims. I cannot remember when this happened. The other cases happened in a cemetery where only suicide

victims and people who died in hospitals are buried. The first individual that I dug up in this place was a drowned corpse that I disemboweled. It was on July 30. You must notice that I seldom mutilated men. I did not take pleasure from it, whereas I had a great time mutilating the corpses of women. I do not know why.

By November 6, 1848, I dug up and mutilated four bodies, two men and two women. The women were at least 60 years old. I cannot remember the exact dates of these exhumations, but they happened every two weeks.

On November 6, at 10 p.m., someone shot at me while I was climbing the graveyard's wall. I was not hit. This fact did not discourage me. I laid on the wet ground and slept for at least 2 hours in the winter cold. I then entered the graveyard, where I dug up the body of a drowned woman. I disemboweled her...

At first, I committed these excesses only after drinking a pint of wine, but I never did this again under the influence of alcohol. Simple annoyance was enough to drive me to such extremes.

You could believe that I was also prone to assault living persons, but on the contrary, I was extremely kind to everybody. I wouldn't hurt a child. So I am sure that I have no enemies. All the non-commissioned officers appreciated my frankness and my cheerfulness."

Appendix C
From the "Confessions of Victor
Ardisson, the 'Vampire of Muy.'"

I dug up the body of the little girl you found at my home, the day after her burial, September 12, 1901.

After midnight, I opened the coffin closed by two dowels. Then, after I removed the body, I closed it and covered it up again with earth, like it was before. When I came back home, I laid the corpse on loose straw, where you found it. Then I indulged myself in disgraceful practices on her. Each time I slept next to her, I assuaged my lust. I always have done it all alone, and my father doesn't know I do such things. To get into the cemetery, I climbed the north wall, and I did the same when I had to leave. Some time ago, I heard that a young woman who I had noticed earlier was seriously ill. I was pleased to hear that, and I promised myself to have sex with her corpse. I had to wait patiently for several days, each day and night I fantasized over her, and this always gave me an erection. When she died I planned to dig up her body the night following her burial. I went to the graveyard at eight o'clock in the evening. I took my time to dig the body up when she was exposed I kissed and fondled her. I noticed that there was no hair on her pubic area and her breasts were small. I satisfied my urges on this corpse. Then I decided to bring it in my home. I did not think

about the dangers I could face while doing this.

It was nearly midnight, when I left the graveyard carrying the body beneath my left arm, and pressing her against my face with my right arm. On my way home, I kissed my burden and told her, "I am bringing you back home. I will not hurt you. You will be fine." Quite luckily, I met no one back home. I laid down next to the corpse telling her, "I love you sweetie." I slept well. When I woke up in the morning I satisfied my lust once more. Before I left I told her, "I'm going to work. I will come back soon, if you want something to eat, just ask." She did not answer, so I guessed she was not hungry. I even told her, "If you're thirsty, I'll bring you a drink."

During the day at work, I often fantasized on this young girl. At noon I came back to see her, and asked her if she was yearning for me. In the morning, I went to meet her again. Until my arrest, I spent all my nights with her, and every night, I satisfied my lust on her. In the meantime, no other girls died. If another girl had died, I would have also brought it home. I would have laid it next to the other one, and I would have fondled them both. But I did not forget the head, and sometimes I kissed her, too.

Appendix D

The Legend of Bluebeard

Note: Considering it involves corpse-

collecting, we couldn't help but offer here our own retelling of the legendary story of Bluebeard. The tale is thought to have been inspired by the hideous crimes alleged against Gilles de Rais, who fought alongside Joan of Arc, and who was burned at the stake for crimes involving the torture and sacrifice of young children during black magic rituals, on October 26, 1440.

She thought herself to be the happiest woman in all of Paris.

To begin with, she was a young country girl from the Languedoc, away to the big city for the first time, to study at university, and she had managed, in such a short amount of time, to land the most eligible bachelor in town as her new husband. Oh, it was almost like a fairy tale ending!

Of course, there was also the fact that he was a young, successful doctor. Really, what more could a blushing young bride ask for? Her handsome, successful man lived in a great old house in the Rue De Anceuil, and was privileged to doctor some of the wealthiest, most prestigious citizens in all of France.

"Of course," she reflected to herself, in a strange moment of doubt, "he is a bit peculiar. Eccentric, really. But, a faithful wife must learn to accept her husband as he is, despite his little peculiarities."

She thought, however, that she might gradually begin to change him.

One of the oddest characteristics he possessed was his seeming obsession with the

color of various rooms. He had had each room painted a different bright shade, and even had the windows tinted accordingly, so that the sunlight streaming through might further illuminate the room with the desired coloring effect.

Furthermore, her movements, as well as those of the few servants, were coordinated with these colors, based on the duties and activities they were expected to be engaged in during the day.

For instance, he told her:

"You must wait, when I am gone, in the Green Room. When you are ready for tea, you will take that in the White Room. Dinner will be served promptly upon my return, in the Yellow Room. Then, it will be time for us to express our undying love for one another; that will be in the Pink Room. After that, I should sit in the study, the Brown Room, for a few hours, catching up on my work. When I am ready to retire, we shall go into the Black Room to sleep. Do you understand?"

She was a little taken aback at the exactness of his specifications, but nonetheless agreed to all he proposed. He then ran his fingers through his strange short beard, and seemed to consider something carefully for a moment, before saying, "Oh, there is one more thing."

"Yes," she bent her head in curiosity.

He smiled.

"There is one room in the house, I call it the 'Blue Room,' where you must never go. Do you understand. Never. It is that door over there--"

And he pointed with one long finger to a door at the far end of the main hall.

“You are not, under any circumstances, EVER to go into that room. All of the servants have been similarly instructed. Never go into that room. The rest of the house is yours to explore, of course.”

She was most shocked at this, but nodded her head dutifully, and tried, as best she could, to forget all about the mysterious "Blue Room."

Well, days passed into weeks, and weeks into months. She established the routine her husband had laid out for her: rise, breakfast in the White Room, spend the day reading light romances in the Green Room, tea in the White Room, dinner in the Yellow Room, romance in the Pink Room, then sleep in the Black Room. One further addition to this was when she was informed that, were she or one of the servants ever in need of being punished, they would be sent, promptly, to the "Red Room."

Which left her wondering: How exactly does he intend to go about punishing us?

The thought was not comforting, and she tried to brush it from her mind.

Each day she would pass the mysterious door to the Blue Room, and each day she would grow more and more curious about it, and why anyone was forbidden to ever enter it. Surely, she thought, he must want the servants to go in there every once in awhile, if only to tidy up.

She began to lose sleep over what might possibly be hidden in there.

Was it treasure? A secret invention?

Or was it something else?

Curiosity began to torment her.

“Curiosity killed the cat,” she reminded herself.

Yet, she could not help it; the overwhelming desire to know just, exactly, what he was hiding in that forbidden room.

One night, as they prepared for bed, she noticed that he had, carelessly, left his keys upon the bureau. He yawned loudly, said, “Oh my dear, it has been such a long and tiring day! You’ll forgive me for retiring early! I feel as if I could sleep like the dead.”

She smiled at him patiently, but, as he got up to undress, she suddenly scooped the keys into the folds of her gown. He turned back to her, smiled got into bed. She got in next to him.

Soon, she was snoring. She was sure he was fast asleep. She carefully got up from the bed, checked that she still had the ring of keys, and slipped out the door.

She looked up and down the hall, but the servants were all in their quarters, and the house was silent and dark. She grabbed a lamp from a table at the top of the stairs, and descended, her long shadow following her down, down...

She stepped into the main hall. It was so quiet, you could have heard a pin drop. She went down the hall, to the door of the forbidden room, and put her hand upon the cold little knob.

To her amazement, it swung slowly open!
It had been unlocked all along!

With her heart hammering, she stepped across the threshold, into the darkness. She turned

up the lamp. A strange, unpleasant odor assaulted her nostril.

Her blood froze in her veins.

A scream died on her lips.

She clapped her hand to her mouth.

“A tea party? And why was I not invited?”

She laughed in spite of her fear, crept forward.

A table was before her. It was laden with a tray, crumpets, cake, little porcelain glasses; a whole tea service. A few ladies were seated around the table. They did not move.

As she got closer, she could see that some of them were in a state of advanced decay.

Others had been meticulously preserved: their rotting faces reconstructed with strips of silk and wax, their shriveled skulls adorned with old wigs; heavy makeup preserved some semblance of femininity, albeit in a garish, grotesque mockery of a womanly face.

Even more curious were the women still standing, propped up by some means she couldn't identify. Two seemed to be arm-in-arm, dancing a waltz that only they could hear. Another was dressed as a servant, forever pouring a draught of wine from the dry neck of an old, cobwebbed bottle. Upon the table, copious droppings and wilted webs danced across the face of an ancient, petrified party cake. She felt sick and excited and trembling with terror all in the same stroke.

What was that? She fancied she could hear movement in the corner of the room. Her eyes, grown accustomed to the dimness, now fixed

upon the one chair that was seemingly covered by a protective sheet. Obviously, there was another human form hidden beneath there.

Were they all of wax? No. Even she knew better than that. The smell in here was charnel; the odor was overpowering. This was an immense tomb, a permanent exhibit of the dead and decaying. A house of madness...

And her husband?

Two hands, those of a woman, protruded from beneath the covered chair in the corner. She thought that she saw one of them move. Despite her overwhelming sense of fear and dread, she approached the chair with her gloved little hand held before her mouth, her trembling fingertips reaching out toward the edge of the old sheet. She knew to pull that sheet away was something she shouldn't do; yet, she was incapable of stopping herself. She felt as if she were experiencing a macabre dream from which she could not awake.

She reached out, grasped the edge of the shroud between her fingers, pulled...

"Aha! I have caught you at last, my little butterfly!"

The pale, womanly hands fell away. They had been severed at the wrist. He had been holding them in his own hands, and dropped them now, jumping up from the chair. His eyes burned with a malevolent savagery the likes of which she had never before seen, and his dark, pointed, blue beard seemed to lend his face a Satanic aspect.

"You! Oh, Henri, *how could you?*"

He laughed maniacally.

“How could I? How could I you ask? Why, you astound me with your ignorance, my dear! It’s really quite simple. Why, even a dullard like yourself should be able to figure it out. I’ve collected these wretches for my own little menagerie. I’ve been quite clever about it all. Oh, don’t you agree? Of course, I always made sure to cover my tracks in an expert fashion. No one has ever suspected, and I’ve grown quite rich from the proceeds!

“And use to getting my way!”

He approached her as she backed away, her hands held in horror to her mouth. His face was a hard, resolute mask of leering insanity, his eyes burned with a murderous passionate rage. She saw something silver glint in his right hand, while his left reached upward on the wall, groping for the electrical switch.

“And now, my dear, if you’ll excuse me, I think it’s time to draw our little party to a close. Oh, don’t bother screaming; this room is soundproof, and no one would hear you anyway. And now, lights out!”

And with that darkness fell. And, soundproof or not, the screaming started, just then, in earnest.

Addendum: Another Retelling of the Classic Legend of "Bluebeard."

Once upon a time, there lived a young

French girl who feared she would never, in all of her life, find a husband.

For some reason, even though many considered her quite lovely, the young men of her village did not flock to her in droves as they did her sister. Instead, she was, more often than not, ignored.

So she waited and pined away from loneliness. Then, one dark, cold day, approaching winter, a strange man rode up to the gates of her family estate, and asked to see her father. He was, perhaps, the strangest man the servants had ever seen, as he was terribly ugly, and, to crown this, he possessed a long, pointed beard of deep, dark blue!

"I am here to see the Monsieur De B!" he stated emphatically, and the little maid winced just to look at him, but she turned on one foot and went down the hall to fetch the Master.

It was not many hours hence when the two young girls were called into their father's study, and their father, seated comfortably in his chair with his pipe, rose and announced the visitor to his two daughters. He then went on to inform them, much to their shock and amazement, that this man was an old friend and business associate of their father, and that this man had come seeking the hand of one of his daughter's in marriage!

At this both of the girls were aghast! Even though the man looked like he was exceedingly wealthy, neither of them could fancy becoming the wife of so hideous a specimen. What to do?

"Oh, you don't want me for a wife," said

one. "I'm a vain, petty and constant woman! Take my sister, instead; she's truly agreeable."

The other replied, "Oh, sister, you flatter me! Why, I'm one of the most atrocious shrews who ever lived! Why, I'd hound and henpeck any man I marry to an early grave! Don't believe anything my sister says about me, sir. It's really her you want to marry, not I!"

And both of them continued in that vein for several minutes, until the strange, blue-bearded man cried, "Enough! Listen to me: I'm going to throw a tremendous banquet for some friends of mine in a fortnight, and both of you must attend. Whoever decides to marry me can decide then and there, and I will announce it at the feast. However, one of you **MUST** choose, as your father owes it to me based on a very old favor I once performed for him. Now, I must bid you adieu!"

And, with a dramatic swish of his long black cloak, the strange man was gone.

Well, the sisters waited on pins and needles for the fateful day, all the time being groomed carefully by their father to be proper ladies. He went so far as to have special dresses made for them, and spent lavishly on their accoutrements for the party.

Then, the day of the grand feast was upon them, and the girls were taken by a special coach through the dark, ghastly forest and into the jagged peaks, until, finally, in a remote section of the country they had never before seen, they came upon what at first appeared to be the ruins of an old castle.

"Oh, it's not a ruins, though," said one of the sisters, "listen, and you can hear the sound of voices and music coming from within!"

Indeed, they knew they had finally reached the ancestral home of the man with the ugly blue beard. They disembarked from the coach and entered the gates, were greeted by a servant in livery, and ushered inside.

They were dazzled at what they saw: here, unmistakably, was the sign of great wealth and station. Famous faces darted in and out from behind masks, costumed exquisitely for a masquerade ball. An enormous table was heaped with every sort of choice delicacy, and enough wine flowed to wet the valleys and deserts of the world.

A full orchestra entertained, as costumed revelers danced to and fro across the glittering ballroom.

"Oh sister, look! Have you ever seen such a grand spectacle?"

The unpopular sister was quite obviously impressed. Finally, the blue bearded "Master of Ceremonies" put in his appearance, wearing a mask that covered his eyes but left his blue beard swinging in the wind for all to see.

"Ah! How good of you to come!"

The sullen sister started to say, "I didn't think we had a choice in the matter," but decided to keep her mouth closed. (Which, on the whole, is oftentimes the best course of action for anyone.)

As the hour drew late, the blue-bearded man took them aside and asked them pointedly,

"Well, have either of you come to a final decision as to which one of you will be my wife?"

Well, one sister looked at the other, and both of them hung their heads in shame. The man had been so generous and kind, and they both now felt obligated to him. Doubly so, because they knew their father wanted that at least one of them should be betrothed to the rich stranger.

The eldest sister looked the blue-bearded man over and, quit softly and truthfully answered, "Were it in my power to say yes, after all the kindnesses shown to us tonight, I would certainly do so. Alas! I find I simply cannot bring myself to be your wife."

At that, the blue-bearded man crossed his arms across his chest, looked disdainful of the honest sister, and then looked at the younger. He asked, "Well, do you feel the same way, or, shall you consent to be my wife?"

At this, the younger sister hung her head in sorrow, disheartened that she should be forced to marry a man so repulsive to her sensibilities. Finally, she peeped, in a tiny, tearful little voice, "Yes, m'lord, I shall be your wife."

At this, the blue-bearded man was overjoyed. He laughed maniacally, danced about the room, clapped his hands together, and kicked his legs up high, exclaiming, "I'm going to be married! I'm going to be married! Hurrah! Hurrah! Hooray! Soon comes my wedding day!"

Many months went into the preparation of the wedding, and no expense was spared by the very rich man. He was determined to make it an

occasion that would be talked of for years and years to come.

In truth though, many of the local villagers began to grumble that this was not the first wedding the strange nobleman had thrown, and, where in the world had his other wives disappeared to? Certainly, as ugly as he was, they didn't all leave him for errant knights? but, these grumblings were soon quashed, and locals were just pleased to be invited to a free party, where rich, sumptuous food and good wine would flow.

After the wedding, the couple went on a lavish tour of Paris, London, Berlin, Vienna, all the capitals of Europe. As exotic and luxuriant as it was, however, the young wife always found herself melancholy and out-of-sorts; though, to her credit, she always tried to put on the best face for her increasingly exasperated husband.

Returning to the castle, the man took his wife aside one day and said, "Here are the keys to all the rooms of this castle. Use them whenever you like! I must go away for a little while. Now, inside each room, you'll find my vast, vast hoard of riches, spread out all over the floors and flowing out of every cupboard and closet and shelf. I am a man rich beyond your wildest dreams! So don't be so downcast all the time!"

He continued, "Er, however, there is ONE room, down below the basement stairs, that you are NEVER to enter, under any circumstances. Do you understand? Never. if you disobey me in this, I shall know, and you will be out the door, and your father will hate you forever! Understand?"

And he grabbed her roughly, and peered into her eyes with his own burning, white-hot orbs. And she nodded meekly, saying, "Y-yes! I...understand."

He smiled, an expression that did nothing to alter his unsavory appearance.

"Good," he said. "Now, I must be off. Remember, you may enter any room, except the one at the bottom of the cellar stairs. Never enter that room, for any reason. Now, my love, I must bid you adieu!"

And with a swish of his cloak, he was gone.

Well, day after day, the young wife entertained what guests as she could convince to come calling. However, it all rather bored her, and her life fell into a dismal pattern of teas and mild parties, and little visits from frumpy dames with more money than wit. The servants were a dull, quiet lot, and provided scant companionship.

Finally, one tiny day, the Devil himself must have crept inside of her, as she found herself wandering down the cellar stairs to the door hidden beneath; and, as she crept, she also found herself fidgeting with the key ring.

Should she open that door? How would he ever know? What could it hurt to take a little peek inside? She didn't know, but, her heart hammering in her chest, she finally found herself inserting the key in the lock, turning it, hearing the faint, bone-rattling sound of the tumblers creaking and gicing way. She rattled the little door knob in her quivering fingers, pushed open the creaking door, and, her candle held high over her head, entered

into the stifling darkness.

What she saw there was, truly, hideous beyond description!

It was a mad, charnal house, a place belched up from the depths of Hell itself.

The bodies of the blue-bearded man's former wives were hanging from hooks on the wall. They looked as if they had been gutted, like animals, and hung up to dry. Their faces, frozen forever in the rictus of death, told the stories of their tragic, violent ends.

The floor was awash, in fact, with slick pools of blood. She stopped herself from screaming and alerting the servants, but, she did manage to drop the door key in the blood.

Bending over quickly, she snatched up the bloody key, and, going out of the room, closed the door behind her, her breath short with terror and shock.

Then, as if in a daze, she went to the basin in her room to wash the key.

Shr thought for a moment about what to do. Just then, her sister came to the gates of the castle, and was allowed entrance by the wicked servants.

She greeted her sister with a meek smile, before relating to her, in a torrent of tears, the terrible truth of what she had found.

"Oh, my dear," said her sister. "You must flee from this terrible place at once, and alert the authorities to what he has done!"

It was, however, too late. Just as the two women were about to quickly gather some

possessions, the blue-bearded fiend came riding up on his quicksilver stallion, his long black cloak and pointed blue beard seemingly more terrible now than ever she beheld them before.

He surmised the scene and guessed, right away, what had occurred. As if to prove it to himself, he held out his long, bony hand and demanded, "Give me that key!"

He carefully examined it while the two women held their breath in terror. His careful gaze scrutinized every inch of it. Finally, he noticed the stain of blood that wouldn't wash away.

"So," he began, his voice turning icy cold while his bloodshot eyes bulged and blazed with fury, "you have discovered my secret. Alas! Now I shall have to kill you both, and hang your bodies besides the others in my special room!"

And with that, he turned to fetch his axe. While he dove into a nearby closet, though, the two women broke their spell of shock and ran, charging up the stairs to the tower and slamming the door behind them.

Crying and gasping in fear, they then piled up chairs and dressers in front of the door, while the killer husband laughed as loudly as he could.

"I'll get you, I'll get you my pretties! You can't cower in there forever, after all. It's only a matter of time!"

And so both of the women went to the only window in the tiny room, and began to cry for help. But the castle was so remote, and the surrounding forest so vast and empty, it seemed they would cry in vain!

Just then, though, as luck would have it, a troop of soldiers who were passing along the dark woodland road heard the pitiful screams for help, and followed them to their source. They looked up at the woman hanging from the window, and asked what was the matter.

"Quickly!" she cried, "you must come inside and rescue my sister and I! My husband is a maniac and is going to take our lives as he has done to women before!"

At this, the handsome young officer and his men went riding through the gates. Then, forcing their way inside, they pushed past the servants until they found the maniac, pacing at the bottom of the stairs, foaming at the mouth, his eyes blazing as he swung his axe at the shadows on the wall. He turned and looked at the invaders, and cried out.

The young officer struck him in the face, knocking his axe from his hand. This the young officer picked up himself, and, swinging it with all his might, cut the head from the blue-bearded fiend, sending it rolling across the stone floor. Blood splattered the walls in a gruesome fashion, but at last the evil ogre was destroyed!

The men charged up the steps, freeing the women from the tower room.

The widowed sister rushed forward, threw her arms around the neck of the handsome young officer, and said, "Oh, my savior! How lucky we are that such a strong, handsome young officer and his men should have been riding by right as we needed them!"

And the young officer was so impressed by the beauty of the young girl that he proposed marriage to her, then and there. And, this time, she assented happily.

The dead fiend, though, went down in legend, where, because of his awful appearance, he was forever after known as BLUEBEARD.

Appendix E: The Black Wedding (Spanish and English Trans.)

Note; In his Autobiography, Count von Cosel makes mention of the old Spanish song "La Boda Negra"; oror the "Black Wedding" by a Spanish balladeer named Alberto Villalon. He says that Elena loved to sing this old song. If so, it was an eerie instance of art foreshadowing life, as the song concerns a lover who steals the corpse of his dead bride-to-be, and sleeps with it, holding it close in bed.

Alberto Villalon ("The Black Wedding")

Oíd la historia que contóme un día
el viejo enterrador de la comarca;
era un amante que con suerte impía
su dulce bien lo arrebató la parca.

Todas las noches iba al cementerio
a visitar la tumba de su hermosa,

la gente murmuraba con misterio
en un muerto escapado de la fosa.

En una horrenda noche hizo pedazos
el mármol de la tumba abandonada;
cavó la tierra y se llevó en sus brazos,
al rígido esqueleto de la amada.

Y allá en la oscuridad más que sombría
del cirio fúnebre a la flama incierta
sentó a su lado la osamenta fría
y celebró sus bodas con la muerta.

Ató con cintas los desnudos huesos
el yerto cráneo coronó de flores,
la horrible boca la cubrió de besos
y le contó sonriendo sus amores.

Llevó a la novia al tálamo mullido
se acostó junto a ella enamorada
y para siempre se quedó dormido
al rígido esqueleto abrazado.

Ató con cintas los desnudos huesos
el yerto cráneo coronó de flores,
la horrible boca la cubrió de besos
y le contó sonriendo sus amores.

Llevó a la novia al tálamo mullido
se acostó junto a ella enamorada
y para siempre se quedó dormido
al rígido esqueleto abrazado.

Alberto Villalon, "The Black
Wedding", English.

Hear the story once told to me,
By an undertaker of the village,
About a lover whose unholy luck
Was to have his bride snatched by the
reaper.

Every night he went to the cemetery
to visit the beautiful one's tomb,
people murmured with wonder
at a dead man escaped from the pit.

On a horrendous night he tore apart
the marble of the abandoned Tomb;
he dug the Earth and took in his arms
the rigid skeleton of the beloved.

And there in the more than gloomy
darkness
the funeral candle flame flickering,
uncertain,
he sat beside the cold bones,
and celebrated their wedding with the
dead.

Tied with ribbons the bare bones,
the rigid skull crowned of flowers;
the horrible mouth he covered with kisses
As smiling he confessed his love.

Took the bride to the soft marriage bed
and lay down next to his lover,
always as he fell asleep
the rigid skeleton he embraced.

Tied with ribbons the bare bones
the inflexible head crowned with flowers,
the horrible mouth he covered with kisses
as, smiling, he told her of his love.

Took the bride to the soft marriage bed
and lay down next to his lover,
always as he fell asleep
the rigid skeleton he embraced.

Appendix F: Individual Articles from the Vocal Website.

Note: The following articles were written individually for the Vocal website, and first appeared there. The reader may feel as if some of this is material rehashed from earlier in the book. We include them here for a sense of completion, and to display the author's thinking on the subject, and its progression.

The Undying Love of Count von Cosel

Ten years ago, I wrote my novel *Buried*

(2008) about a curious case of "forbidden love" that took place many, many decades ago, in Key West Florida. The story, that of German immigrant "Count" Carl von Cosel, in reality one Otto Carl Tanzler, captured my creative imagination in a way few stories ever have: what he termed his "undying love" for his chosen bride, the tragic Elena Milagro de Hoyos, the young Cuban immigrant girl who succumbed to a tuberculoid lung at the tender age of twenty-two. Carl, the putative "Count" (he swore he was descended from a German countess whose poltergeist-like phantasm frequently haunted him) commenced, upon the death of his beloved, to exhume the body and steal away with it to his squalid home. He did this after perpetrating medical quackery upon the luckless Elena, trying, through dint of his bizarre "treatments," to cure her of her disease. Predictably, this did NOT work; but, of course, if it actually had, we wouldn't know this story.

The Count, born in Dresden Germany in 1877, describes, in his *Secret Diary* (or "Confessions" if you like) his childhood as one wherein he exhibited brilliance at an early age, was determined to build gliders, do scientific experiments, and generally behave like a little mad genius. He furthermore paints a portrait of his encounter with the ghost of the castle wherein his family, said to be descended from nobility, resided. He describes levitating tables, items thrown to the floor, and curtains going up in flames, unaccountably.

Perhaps because of this, he began to study

metaphysics and spiritualism, a study that would absorb him for the rest of his life; marking his mind with a preoccupation with death, and how to cross the chasm from one side of the grave to the other.

Perhaps a bit more realistically, after finding himself immigrating to Australia, he was interred, for a short period during World War 1, in a camp for undesirable aliens. It is here he undoubtedly began to experience the cold brush with the tragic, the inner darkness that would mark his being until the end of his days. He describes building a musical organ out of driftwood; not, however, the least believable of his many claims. (Some of his claims included the dubious claim of taking multiple degrees and doctorates; Tanzler was eager to demonstrate his genius to the world.)

After being released, his globe-trotting took him to Italy, where, in a cemetery, a vision of a "White Lady" emerging from a monument and disappearing led him to believe the spirit of his ancient relative, the Countess, was attempting to contact him.

As if to confirm this, she later, he claims in the *Diary*, appeared by his bedside, slightly obscuring the vision of another phantom, a striking young woman whose image is then burned into his mind permanently. The Countess promises him that this is his "one true love," for which he will later write that he has nothing but "undying love."

He then departed to Cuba. There, he had this mysterious phantasm as a dinner guest for a short period. A literal ghost, one supposes; or maybe a psychic precognition of what was to

come.

His final destination is Key West, Florida. There, with a young family, a wife and daughter in tow (he lives apart from them, estranged, for reasons that are never fully made clear), he became a radiologist at a military hospital facility, making his living reading X-rays. It is here, on the tubercular ward, he met the one supreme fixation of his life: Elena Milagro de Hoyos, his "Elena." He's in his early fifties; she's not yet twenty-one.

This, then, is the image of his "Phantom," the ghost revealed to him by the Countess.

He's smitten; infatuated obsessively. He lavished gifts on the young tuberculoid, although, where he gets money for expensive perfumes and jewels, clothing and furnishings, he never makes quite clear in his writings. Elena, who was previously married to a profligate husband that ran off, was both charmed and distressed by the undeniably erudite but bizarre older gentleman. His assurances that he can "cure" Elena of her consumption, through his quack remedies (which include electrical batteries, bizarre diets, and other highly-dubious practices), placated her disapproving family somewhat; also, of course, Von Cosel's largesse.

Von Cosel describes Elena's family uncharitably as loud and, obviously, oblivious to her fragile health. Be that as it may, his own ministrations proved ultimately futile, and Elena succumbed in 1931 to her disease. She was twenty-two.

Disconsolate, Carl built for her a mausoleum (one wonders again: Where did he get his money?), a "special crypt" wherein he placed her casket, which was sealed with locks (to keep her from escaping?), and where he could sit and sing to her old Spanish ballads, such as "La Boda Negra" ("The Black Wedding," about a man that steals the corpse of a woman he loved, who has died) to her. He became a lean, near-spectral wraith in the graveyard himself, and, locally, tongues began to wag.

"Promises to the dead are sacred, and must be kept!"

This is the way von Cosel put it in his diary. He had, after all, promised her they would always be together, that he would care for her unto the end of the world. And, to that end, it was not long (a mere two years) before, hearing her voice come through the cracks in the surface of her crypt, in the fragments of his mind itself, he, under cover of darkness one evening, stole Elena from her earthly resting place. Loading her atop a little wagon, he stealthily left the cemetery, departing to a rooming house, wherein he managed to get the thing in through a window; although he became covered in putrescence and local dogs were "becoming disturbed" at the reek. He bathed in whiskey, as there was "no running water" in his place. The mind boggles.

So began the patient, piece-by-piece reconstruction, over a period of SEVEN YEARS, of

the slowly deteriorating physical form of Elena Milagro de Hoyos. Creating a wooden "lip" around his bed, to collect fluids; patiently waxing strips of white silk to the rapidly skeletonizing face; providing glass eyes; a wig; makeup; a dress.

It was A Rose for Emily, reversed. It was Sir John Pryce and Joan of Castile, Victor Ardisson, and Sergeant Bertrand again. It was, in Carl Tanzler von Cosel's mind "love."

To finally transport his beloved to a place secluded enough to provide for her continued care, he utilized the "Cosmic Space Plane" he was constructing on the grounds of the hospital wherein he worked. The plane, which had no wings, was christened "The Comtessa", and was used to transport the body, secretly, to a ramshackle place on the beach. Mario, the husband of Elena's sister Nana, made quite a show of riding atop it, to the gaze of curious onlookers (we must assume he had no idea his long-dead sister-in-law was being smuggled inside).

The "Laboratory" on the Beach

Like something out of a gothic potboiler, Von Cosel built his shrine for Elena in this final home, frequently playing the organ for her, imagining their conversations in the heated confines of his rather exceptional brain scape. And, but for a little gossip, and the prying curiosity of Elena's sister Nana, all would have remained thus. But, of course, in life, and AS LIFE, all things must come to an end, in the fullness of time.

Nana confronted Carl, demanding to see if Elena was still in her tomb. Of course, she wasn't. Threatening to fetch the law, Nana was finally able to pressure Von Cosel into consent. Maybe he was so mad at this point, he really thought nothing much would be done about him possessing his morbid madam.

"Oh, that's not Elena!" protested Nana. Mario, a bit more level-headed, said, "What's the matter, Nana? You can see that Elena is not in her tomb!"

Or, something to that effect.

It was not long after that that von Cosel was arrested.

"Nothing left. Nothing human."



Elena's tomb, built for her by von Cosel. This was later, mysteriously, illegally dynamited. No one was ever apprehended for this crime.

An ensuing trial yielded little. Von Cosel reaped sympathetic letters and gifts from women

who were touched by the undying (if incredibly macabre) devotion of the old gent; the charges of grave robbing were null and void, the statute of limitations having run out five years previously.

Von Cosel was released, free and infamous. Elena, who had been exhibited at a local mortuary to a massive throng of curiosity seekers, all of whom filed most eagerly past the unearthly, putrid princess, the "giant porcelain doll" as one tough copper described it. "There was nothing left..." he later said. "Nothing human."

Indeed, she looked a fat, white slug, this long-dead Cuban beauty, this poor, doomed "Angel of the Tomb." A thing that, for von Cosel, was a gateway of communication; an Ouija of flesh and bone, wire, rags, and wax he had painstakingly constructed; to reanimate the body, as in an H.P. Lovecraft pulp horror yarn.

"Moonlight Sonata"

Elena reclines peacefully in eternal slumber. Her body is stuffed with rags, bones held together with wires, flesh reconstructed with waxed silk. Her form has been doused with perfume to mask the sickening stench.



"Elena.". Elena reclines peacefully in eternal slumber. Her body is stuffed with rags, bones held together with wires, flesh reconstructed with waxed silk. Her form has been doused with perfume to mask the sickening stench.

Moving, changing identities of infamy, he died in 1951. He was found clutching a plaster death mask of "His Elena," devoted paramour to the bitter end.

His diary ends, oddly, invoking (if I remember correctly) Beethoven's Ninth. Perhaps the Fourth Movement: "Ode to Joy." But that isn't quite right, is it? There is no joy in this story. There is the lingering ghost of a young Cuban beauty, one doomed to die before she had ever really lived. And there is the mad, covetous love of a tottering eccentric, one whose tenuous grasp on the real

was so precarious that a repellent puppet made from the rotting bones of a moldering stiff could fuel his fantasies.

But fantasy is the world, is it not?

Instead, we suggest the musical theme here should be Beethoven. But, not the Ninth. Instead, we suggest a more fitting musical outro would be "Moonlight Sonata."

Five Famous Necrophiles

The subject of necrophilia is one that is near and dear to my sordid spirit; there is something in the obsessive love for an idealized (albeit dead) paramour that strikes us as the very height of deeply touching romantic love.

We have written not one, but TWO small books (our novel *Buried*, as well as *The Men Who Loved the Dead*, an unpublished monograph on the subject.) about romantic necrophilia; "romantic necrophilia" as distinguished from "opportunistic necrophilia," or one of the other classifications given by Dr. Anil Aggrawal in his excellent text *Necrophilia: Medico-Legal and Forensic Aspects*. (Which, when I borrowed it through Interlibrary Loan, no doubt left the library staff even more leery of me than they previously had been.)

Necrophilia is a practice both odious and morbidly fascinating at the same stroke; mix in the idea of someone who simply cannot let go of their loved one at their passing; who will steal the body,

painstakingly preserve it as it decays, build to it a shrine, speak for it, breathe for it, imbue it with a reanimated existence (in their psychopathic brain scape, of course) and you have the makings for a never ending slew of morbid gothic potboilers.

The practice was known in the ancient world. Greek tyrant Periander, Herod the Tetrarch (who had his wife Mariamne "preserved" in honey, where after he made love to her until the remains passed the point of being detestable) and other ancient world grotesques indulged in it. For our purposes, we will recount a small list of some of our personal favorites.

So, without further adieu, let us recount the Wretched Romances of the Rotten, as we present for your edification and delectation, "Five Famous Necrophiles of Morgueland." (All men recounted here, but the curious should not discount the contributions made by such female necro- pioneers as Joan of Castile and Karen Greenlee. No chauvinists we.)

1. Henri Blot

We just like his name. Henri (Pronounced, we take it, "awnrey") was a little man once quoted as saying to an examining magistrate: "Each man to his taste. Mine is for corpses."

In 1886, the "pretty boy" dandy crept into a Parisian cemetery, unearthed the body of ballerina Ferdinand Mero, laid aside the bouquets of flowers, and upon a covering of paper, ravished the cold husk of flesh, thereafter falling to blissful,

somnolent slumber. Upon awakening, it is said he barely had enough time to pull up his breeches and depart before risking discovery by the gendarmes. Alas, the next time he endeavored to disinter a corpse (curiously, also that of a young ballerina) he would not be so lucky.



*"The Vampire of Mont Parnasse": Sergeant
Francois Bertrand*

2. Sergeant Francois Bertrand

A necrophile's necrophile, Sergeant Bertrand was, quite apparently, a misfit his entire life--in the army, he was known to not even visit

prostitutes, as his erotic predilections prevented him from making love in a conventional manner. Be that as it may, the "Vampire of Montparnasse" was more than adept at stealing into cemeteries at night, exhuming the bodies of young women (his preferred victims), and ravishing them. Thereafter, he would dismember them in a mad heat of passion. Your present author well remembers coming across a book as a child, wherein was related a scenario depicting Bertrand getting into a little boat, rowing across a river to the gates of a craggy, forgotten boneyard, and stealing inside. He had apparently been drawn by some psychic force of love too great for him to withstand.

There, finding a freshly buried beauty to unearth, he quickly commenced exhumation, and lay with her, a truly gruesome tableaux for anyone that would happen upon the scene, underneath the winking stars.

Here we have a selection or two of his own confessions:

After a few days of rest, the sickness came back, more violent than ever. We were staying in the Ivry Camp; at night, the guards were posted very near and their instructions were very severe, but nothing could stop me. I climbed out of the camp every night, to go to the Montparnasse

Cemetery...

Some fellows and their strange ways!
He was arrested and jailed in 1841.



"The Vampire of Mui": Victor Ardisson

3. Victor Ardisson

The French seem to have more than their fair share of famous necros. Such as "Victor of the Heavenly Eyes."

The baby-faced, beatific "Vampire of Mui," who spent his debased, debauched childhood performing grotesque acts at school, went, as naturally as a pig in manure, to the profession of sexton at a local cemetery. It was here that he robbed corpses of clothing and other valuables; even though, of course, the stuff was often rather wretched and noxious. Also, he stole a number of bodies, or pieces of them. Ardisson, who bore an almost weirdly holy look in his psychotic gaze, confessed himself at a genuine loss when the

severed heads of his corpse-brides failed to answer him when he spoke .

Here again, we have some pointed confessions:

It was nearly midnight, when I left the graveyard carrying the body beneath my left arm, and pressing her against my face with my right arm. On my way home, I kissed my burden and told her, "I am bringing you back home. I will not hurt you. You will be fine." Quite luckily, I met no one back home. I laid down next to the corpse telling her, "I love you sweetie." I slept well. When I woke up in the morning [...] I told her, "I'm going to work. I will come back soon, if you want something to eat, just ask." She did not answer, so I guessed she was not hungry.

Victor was caught and sentenced to confinement in a mental asylum in 1901.

4. Jean Baptiste

The legend of Jean Baptiste is one of Salt Lake City Utah's most famous. In 1861, a man named Moroni Clawson, attempting the political assassination of a sitting Governor known to be unfriendly to Mormons, escaped from custody and

was himself killed by lawman Henry Heath. Heath, sorrowful at having had to kill the man, later provided for the indigent Clawson a new burial suit. Days later, when the body was to be moved for reburial elsewhere, Clawson's brother was intensely disturbed to find that the body was completely naked! Suspecting grave robbery, Heath confronted gravedigger Jean Baptiste at his home.

A crate of baby shoes and other articles of clothing, most boiled in lye to kill vermin, suggested that Baptiste had a long-standing practice of robbing HUNDREDS of graves. And, furthermore, given the condition in which Clawson's body was found, it was likewise suspected that Baptiste might have been doing a little more to the corpses than merely robbing them of burial clothes and other valuable goods.

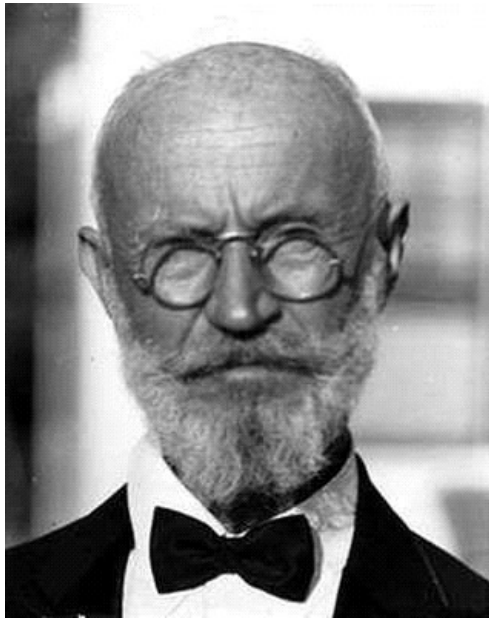
A howling mob, incensed and ready to lynch Baptiste, gathered outside the jail, and none other than Brigham Young himself was forced to come forward and reassure the believers that their relatives would rise from the graves wearing the clothes they were originally buried in, come Judgement Day. Baptiste was exiled to prevent mob justice from seizing him: first to Antelope island, and later to Fremont Island, in the Great Salt Lake, where he was deposited either with or without a ball-and-chain, depending on which version you believe.

BUT, the story does not end there.

Cattle herders (what were they doing on the island? One wonders.) later visited, finding

strips of leather and chopped wood, and no Jean Baptiste. They guessed, probably correctly, that he had built for himself a raft, and escaped his imprisonment. He was never seen again.

His ghost was, though. And, who knows? maybe he still walks lonely Fremont Island to this day, his soul tormented among the lonely dead that he loved.



The brilliant, disturbed Otto Carl Tanzler, who dubbed himself "Count von Cosel."

5. Count von Cosel

The "World Heavyweight Champion Negro" himself, Carl Otto Tanzler, a.k.a "Count von Cosel" (as he fancied himself), was an eccentric (some would even say mad) German immigrant who had spent time in an interment camp in Australia during WW1. Later moving to Havana, where a vision in the Campo de Santo cemetery, and a visit by his ancient, titled ancestor, Countess von Cosel, revealed to him the image of his "one undying love," Carl finally ended up immigrating to Key West, Florida.

The quack "Doctor" would become a radiological technician at a military hospital in Key West, would endeavor to build his own airplane, and would become infatuated with a very much younger Cuban immigrant girl named Elena Milagro de Hoyos, who had contracted tuberculosis from working in a cigar factory. No matter, Carl assured her family, his quack nostrums (including puzzling experiments with electrical apparatus) could cure her. As he was undertaking this endeavor, he lavished gifts upon his Elena, becoming more and more obsessed.



Elena de Hoyos' living photo, with remains

Predictably, Von Cosel's nutty cures did NOT cure Elena, and she died in 1931. Carl then had constructed for her a special tomb, where he would sit, singing old Spanish songs to her casket, weeping and wailing; ultimately, psychologically unable to "just let go."

He finally stole the body, living with it in his home for a period of five years. As it decayed, he patiently reconstructed the putrid flesh, using strips of silk dipped in paraffin, wiring the bones back together as they deteriorated and fell to pieces; of course, he bought large quantities of bug spray and perfume to mask the putrid odor.

He was finally discovered by Elena's sister, who, suspecting Elena was not in her tomb, confronted the amorous old lunatic. The result of all of his careful, patient care was a weirdly horrific monstrosity, a thing that looked like a giant porcelain doll. Nothing really human was left in the features, nothing "real."

The remains were put on display and

thousands of people in Key West filed past to view them. (These folks were starved for entertainment, we take it.)

Carl was never prosecuted; the statute of limitations on his crime had run out years ago, and the prosecutor couldn't properly define exactly what, if any, crime he had committed since. Carl was let go, having received many kind letters of sympathy from women admirers who were touched by his "undying love."

Carl died in 1952. he was found clutching a plastic death mask of his Elena.

Undying love, indeed.

Last Caress: A Review of *Kissed* (1994)

Necrophilia, like incest, cannibalism and other taboo practices, is a subject both forbidden and tawdry—attracting those low spirits who wish to be titillated by the morbid and revolting excesses of the mentally deranged. Alternately, it is the paen Poe and other poetasters of a melancholy and sepulchral countenance paid to the Final Howl of Love: a searing, grave-defiant, passionate embrace of the sacred form, the illusion; the fast-decaying image, or shell. Is there a yolk within the egg? That is what religion and even science asks; or rather, what religion propounds while science investigates the possibility.

The serial killer or sadist does not quite fit here: Ted Bundy screwing corpses at his mountain retreat is not in quite the same league as Count

von Cosel, who stole the corpse of the beautiful, doomed Elena Milagro de Hoyas to painstakingly, over a period of years, reconstruct her, bit by rotting bit, with paraffin and silk and waxen rags. There was no sadism there, only... love, pure and passionate and patient. Likewise with Henri Blot, Joan of Castile, perhaps even Victor Ardisson, the "Vampire of Muy," who used to line the heads of corpses up and kiss them, talk to them, call them "sweetie." (He was genuinely confused when they failed to answer him.)

In modern times, we have the example of Karen Greenlee, presented in an article by Jim Morton, (published in the late maverick publisher Adam Parfrey's book of seminal counter cultural outrages, *Apocalypse Culture*), as an "Unrepentant Necrophile," a woman who worked in the funeral industry, stole into mortuaries at night, molested the corpses of young, desirable men (who, she admits, at the time, were often gay men that had died tragically of AIDS).

Greenlee, describing herself as a "morgue rat," and lamenting that this life may be her "rat hole, possibly my tomb," stole the corpse of a man named John Mercure and was apprehended later with her suicide note. She had apparently fallen in love with Mercure—or, at last, what was left of him.

That was in 1978. Greenlee became, eventually, fast friends with Leilah Wendell, of the "New Orleans Death Museum," which I take it is now called the "Westgate." Leilah, an authoress who has written a book for ritualistically invoking

the literal "Angel of Death" ("Azrael" in Hebrew lore), collects and exhibits necrophilia art, as well as having previously published fairly extensively on her personal relationship with the death energy, or force.

As for myself, the subject has called me home numerous times. The necrophiliac history of "Count von Cosel" inspired my first long novel *Buried* (2007), as well as the short, curiously as-of-yet unfinished monograph *The Men Who Loved the Dead* (2015)—and numerous other short articles, written for Vocal, primarily.

My attraction is not with corpse-fucking; no. If that were the case, I would find the actions of individuals such as Bundy and Dahmer to be of equal interest as those of Count von Cosel or Sergeant Bertrand. I do not, and do not write about them in the same context. My interest is only for those who share a special kinship with the dead, born of fantasy or affinity, or the imbuing of a desired object with a new, fantastic half-life; the "living doll," the desired object of affection that drove Hans Bellmer to craft representations of the flesh he could imbue with persona; that compels some men to fuck a blow-up imitation that they take as fantasy mates; that undeniable and very real faculty of the male (sometimes female) mind to animate, spiritually, that which is most certainly "dead in the flesh."

To that end, we wanted to see the movie *Kissed* for many years, it taking on the same weird, near-legendary status as *Eraserhead* or *Heartbeat in the Brain* did in the years before the internet

made everything readily available, at least in the sense of visual media or recordings. While, upon first seeing it, we found ourselves to be slightly underwhelmed, upon repeated viewings we've found that the film starts to grow on you—like mold on a casket lid.

Sandra Larson (the pale, waif-like, weirdly alluring Canadian actress Molly Parker) is presented, in scenes from her childhood, as a strange young girl (played by Natasha Morley) obsessed with ritualistically chanting over her dead pets before casting them out the window by moonlight. Chanting, dancing, and acting, perhaps, as a "psycho pomp," or even midwife to the incorporeal essence of the inert flesh; but the flesh, we see, she rubs against her childhood skin, sometimes leaving streaks of blood.

A weirdly *Lolita*-like scene has Sandra and her friend Carol (Jessie Winter Mudie) burying dead chipmunks at an impromptu pet cemetery, before stripping down to their skivvies and whirling like dervishes. Earlier, we see Sandra chanting "I shroud the body, shroud the body, shroud the body..." before hiking at night into the woods with candles, to strip, whirl, and bury a bird in a jewelry box.

Needless to say, her friendship with Carol (who claims "she can see in the dark, and talk to ghosts and spirits") is not long-lived, and we next are presented with a grown-up Sandra, a seemingly shy, introverted and strange young woman who goes from working at a flower shop to a funeral home. Finally, she asks the mortician, the

portly Mr. Wallis (Jay Brazeau) if he will teach her to be an embalmer.

He agrees, demonstrating the proper use of a trocar ("It's called the 'Mortician's Sword!'" he informs her), and warning her of the unpleasant odor of rotting cadavers. Regardless, it is an odor she likes. (Karen Greenlee, the real-life inspiration here, was quoted as saying, "Well, there are death odors, and then there are death odors!" She goes on to say that a body "that has been floating for three days" doesn't appeal to her, because of the overwhelming putrescent stench of a corpse in that condition.)

Sandra takes to her new avocation very well. She goes to college to study being a mortician, but we are also presented with scenes of her alone in the prep room, stripped down to her underwear, whirling about once again in a kind of mystical ecstasy, invoking some infernal cone of power before climbing atop the inert corpse.

The camera relishes her long thin fingers caressing the cadaver's hair, giving bright, almost harsh close-up images of the texture of death behind sodium arc lights that illuminate in white, spiritualistic detail; the stand-in for the sacred, fabled tunnel Sandra stands at the portal of, midwifing the dead from their vacated husks to that other side, that pure energy that is all its own.

When you die, your life... flashes,
and you disintegrate, radiating
energy. When a thing turns into its
opposite, when love becomes hate,

there are always sparks. But when life turns into death, it's explosive. There are streaks of light, magical, and electrifying. Everyone senses something, some energy, some spirit, some sort of illumination, But I see it. I've seen bodies shining like stars.

She has occasional conversations, casket-side, with the intensely creepy janitor played by James Timmons. He has previously, upon introduction, kissed her hand. He confesses that he has had occasion to walk in on Mr. Wallis *in flagrante delicto* with a young male cadaver. "Mr. Wallis is a troubled man," says Jan, in a pathetic understatement. The audience already knows Sandra understands, quite well.

Central to the plot of *Kissed* is the romance between Sandra, the reserved and seemingly emotionally frigid young woman, an odd loner, and Matt (Peter Outerbridge), an emotionally troubled young fellow college student who lives in a basement.

Smitten with the pale, lovely young woman, he makes of her a present of a particular anatomy text, and the two begin dating. One could easily see Matt among a million lost and desperate young men; indeed, he reminds me, vaguely, of young fellows I went to college with. His increasing emotional instability could have, at its root, any number of mitigating factors. Here, he has fixated on a young woman who is fascinating because, in

the same stroke, she represents a transgressor or "other," some new possibility he can attain, some new gateway promising a thrill society, conventional society, cannot afford him, even in the form of drugs. Their sex, of course, lacks the intimacy Sandra feels with a young male cadaver. She confesses to Matt that she "makes love" to the dead.

There is not much more to *Kissed*, really. Matt becomes increasingly unhinged, realizing that he can never, in a sense, fulfill the place that death, that the dead, have for Sandra; whose love or erotic fixation seems rooted partly in the mystical. She seems a sort of way-shower or liaison between the dearly-departed, and the infinity beyond. Matt, realizing he can never be a part of that, realizing that she has a world, in the most literal sense "all her own," tries to simulate the death he believes she desires, the deep truth about human mortality and the nature of life and existence that he believes she somehow possesses.

But does she? We are never quite, as an audience, certain she is anything more than a psychologically distorted young woman; not a death-mystic, perhaps simply a mental case. Matt begins to make copious notes of her every action. He puts on corpse makeup to simulate death. We see the edges of his surface begin to shatter.

He tells her: "I know I have to do it now. Fuck a corpse." To which she replies, "I don't fuck everything that's dead." If it is a religious experience for Sandra, in the inverse proportion that one usually uses religion as a celebration (or,

at the very least, a sanctification) of life, then, quite obviously, Matt will never realize anything similar. Unless he is "converted."

He does this by his own hand. In the final act, we see him in his basement room, atop a chair, nude, ready to hang himself. Sandra walks in to try and stop him, but is unable to do so before he takes the plunge. Thus, he becomes one of "them"; he joins the dead.

The final scene shows the extreme, harsh, brightly-lit closeup of Sandra running her fingers through a cadaver's hair, confessing that the exploding "death energy" that shines like a burning sun is a place where she now sees Matt.

We see the image of our dead, haunting us. Forever young and forever old, they play through the shadow-show of our consciousness. The bright white light scenes that bookend *Kissed*, of course, are stand-ins for the afterlife experience, the famed "tunnel" we are said to travel down as the soul departs the body.

An audio book on the occult, ripped from YouTube, naturally, assures the listener that "death energy" is real and vital, is grey, can be acquired (one supposes like a charging battery) at cemeteries and funeral parlors, to be used in malicious spells for black magic purposes. Death DOES have its own energy; but, in an extraordinary sense of absence. It's a cold, hollow, inert feeling; an energy that suffocates and declines.

Don't Fear the Reaper

The Hindus believe in the cyclic nature of all things: age follows upon age, in a succession of endless TIME, wherein even Brahma sleeps at the "breathing-in" of the universe. Death is a part of the cycle of all things, but Krishna reminds us that the "End of death is birth." Men do not escape the succession of births and deaths and rebirths, but first must do their sacred duty, find *Moksha*, or dissolution of the material body, and rejoin "The Supreme Personality of Godhead."

Vishnu, the "World Sustaining" is joined by Shiva, the Lord of Time and Decay, dissolution; "I am become Shiva, destroyer of worlds," said Robert Oppenheimer at Trinity nuclear testing site, somewhat incorrectly quoting verse 11:32 of the *Bhagavad-gita*. Religion endlessly reminds us of the cyclic nature of life and time, how death precedes rebirth; until "Divine Enlightenment" or rapture releases the soul from the endless cycle of imprisonment. At least, this is what some religion teaches us.

Another example: Tibetan monks feed the carcasses of their dead to seagulls, to propitiate the life-cycle; giving their bodies back to the sacred grasp of all-consuming Nature,

Western minds perceive scientifically that the body, upon dissolution, extinguishes the consciousness, which is simply an electrical process borne of chemicals in the lump of grey matter affixed between the ears, our stories of ghosts and our investigations into parapsychology and the paranormal notwithstanding.

I recently have become more intimately

familiar with Mr. Death than in any other time than I can closely remember. Both of my grandparents died within seventy-two hours of each other, one from massive cardiac arrest. I was with him at the hospital, along with the rest of my virtually estranged family, until he died at around six o'clock the following morning.

His outer shell was a hideous thing, sustained by an oxygen mask, but with a directive that they were NOT to attempt resuscitation. So it was simply a waiting game. I sat, hour after hour, suddenly brooding about the finality of these moments. Where was the consciousness? Trapped inside that husk, somewhere, unable to reach out, to communicate? The doctor assured us that grandfather could hear us gathered around him, speaking. He would never again be able to speak to us with human lips.

Where, I wondered, was the brass band? Where were the special honors for being "John Q Goodcitizen?" Seemingly, none of it mattered. You died, and that was that; they zipped you into this body bag, and wheeled you away, whether or not you bothered to vote, kept your lawn cared for, or went to church every Easter. Was it all a sad joke, a conscious form of self-deception?; to stave off the cold, black, terminal chill of the grave; the abyss, from which stares back at us, whispers back at us? What, pray tell? Nothing, perhaps. But, in the ideas of the mystics and psychopomps and death workers, perhaps, something.

When my grandmother died, two days later, I was inured, at that point, to the empty,

frozen face of inanimate shock that permeates the visage of *them*... and "them" is, exactly, what they become. An Other; an alien. Whitley Strieber, in *Communion*, theorized that his ubiquitous "Grey Aliens" might, in point of fact, be OUR dead, come back from some eternal place, some other dimension, some place, as Poe might have put it, "Out of Space--Out of Time."

(Aside: As I walked into the nursing home to find my grandmother dead, the Gene Kauer theme from *Faces of Death* (1978), titled on the soundtrack album as "L.A. County Morgue," was playing in my head. It's a gentle, melancholy, poignant piece of elevator or lounge music, but with just a tinge of macabre dissonant creep, enough to mark it as the theme created for the movie it helped make infamous.)

It was a solemn moment, but one that brought a sense of completion, of finality. Then, a double funeral. The pale, artificial mockery of the embalmed stiff, the cloying stench of roses; hugs and kisses; hours and days fold back into the curtain of memory.

My own brush with death, most recent, happened when I had a heart stent placed in the Lower Anterior Descending artery of my heart, due to an eighty-percent blockage. If I had not had had ordered a heart cath due to getting checked out for an unrelated operation, this would never have been discovered. Most likely, I would have had the "widow maker" heart attack, and would not be here to write these words to you.

That was all well and good, the surgeon

assured me. I was fine now. Correct? Well, a month later, I began to have the same symptoms. Dizziness, shortness of breath, chest pain, weird sensations in my arms and legs. Heart palpitations.

I went through a week of hell, a week where I thought I was literally on the verge of a massive heart attack or stroke. I started thinking of my life in terms of weeks, possibly days. I slept on my mother's couch, popped nitroglycerin and pain pills and nerve pills, and took several ambulance rides to emergency.

A ride to St. Joseph's hospital in Ft. Wayne was diverted when my heart rate became dangerously high. The female EMT panicked, pronounced me "too unstable" to make it to St. Joseph's, and diverted the ambulance to Lutheran Hospital (in Fort Wayne, Indiana) instead. As we plunged through the night, with the sirens blaring, I'll never forget the female EMT sticking the inflatable electric shock pads to my chest and telling me, "I'm getting ready for you." Her words now have an ominous ring to them, as if she were not simply stating a fact of what actions she would take in the corporeal world, but was stating, in much the same way as Sandra Larson in *Kissed*, that she was going to lead me through the Gates of Death, into that other world, in the same manner as Virgil lead Dante.

I was feverishly chanting the Maha Mantra, my fingers white-knuckling the rail of the gurney I was on. At no time did any of my accomplishments, or lack thereof, enter into my mind. I no more cared about what books I had

authored, or failed to, what art I had created or music I had recorded, than I cared about the man in the moon. I was conscious only that, should I lose consciousness, I would find myself outside the body and traveling to a new, terrifying and mystifying Unknown Realm, where "Once borne, no traveler returns." Shakespeare's "Undiscovered Country," in other words.

But I did not die. Not then, at any rate. (Another catheter operation showed that everything was "fine." I am assured it was all due to "generalized anxiety disorder." But, could it be?)

Last night, I dreamed I was holding the withered bones of an estranged relative in my arms, she being wound in her shroud. My mother begged me not to hold her thus, but I lie with her there, hearing her murmur, though she were dead.

Getting up, after the act of love, I put a cloth across her face.

"Angels see thee to thy rest."

I had drained the life from this one, for, years ago, draining me. I had loved her till death.

This short essay has gone far afield of the mere movie that I wanted to review. *Kissed* is less about necrophilia than necromancy. Sandra Larson

is the angel midwife "soul rescue," helping to shuttle the departed into that happy place, "into the light." But, for some, there must be darkness.

Havelock-Ellis, quoted in Dr. Anil Aggrawal's excellent text *Necrophilia: Forensic and Medico-Legal Aspects* (CRC Press, 2010), quotes the case of a grave digger turned necrophile who said:

As living women felt nothing but
repulsion for me, it was quite
natural I should turn to the dead,
who have never repulsed me. I use
to say tender things to them like,
'My beautiful. My love. I love you.

And herein lies the secret of the common necrophile: they are simply transferring feelings of powerlessness and inadequacy, lust and a desire to control, over an object they can imbue with significance, with persona, with LIFE. One that cannot reject these "little men," these outcasts; these cyphers.

(In our own, necrophiliac culture of death-obsession, James Dean and Marilyn Monroe, Elvis and any other number of stars are kept in a kind of vicarious "ever sexy and still alive" netherworld by electronic media and kitsch consumables: t-shirts, coffee mugs, even full-body, full-blown performing "lookalikes.")

Not like Count von Cosel, who, truly, loved and was infatuated with his Elena. And not like Sandra Larson, who is the Midwife of the Mouldering, the Death Angel energy-bearer,

bringing forth the radiance of the dying flame, to impart the deeper truth beyond life. And death.

To quote a popular punk rock song from my wayward youth, (by the incredibly popular cult band The Misfits), hers is just "one last caress."

Note. Dr. Aggarwal further notes that ten percent of all cases of necrophilia involve female perpetrators, the Joan of Castile's and Cristina Belgiojoso of our day. C'est la vie!

He Robbed Their Graves!

It was a hardscrabble life, as well as death, for Moroni Walker.

The young man, who had been imprisoned for killing a law officer, made good his escape from prison. Trying desperately to make his way out of Utah, however, he was unceremoniously dispatched from this hurting world by the sheriff's posse. Such was the end of Moroni Walker. However, it was not the end of his story (although he would, understandably, be oblivious to further developments, as he was now stone dead).

His brother George, most definitely NOT a Mormon himself but a Man from The East, came to the Great Salt Lake region in order to exhume and return the corpse of his errant, outlaw brother to a spot closer to his kin. He didn't understand the Mormon religion, of course; however, his request was granted. (Who, after all, cares much of anything about the corpse of a dead criminal?)

Opening the casket, George Walker was

astounded to find his brother butt naked and lying face down. Scratching his buggy, sweaty mid-Nineteenth Century head, he must have wondered aloud, “How in tarnation did the feller get to be in such a right disreputable state?”

He went to the laws, who put a “stake out” (or whatever they called it at the time) on the cemeter, as their suspicions rested almost entirely on one man—Jean Baptiste, the sexton.

They caught Jean eventually a-trundling a wheelbarrow full of clothing from a recently opened grave—and, looking in the bushes, found even more clothing!

Quickly collaring him, and leading him home, they found his haggard old crone of a wife (we are only guessing, but can you really imagine such a man being married to an attractive, young, care-free debutante?) in the basement, boiling the clothes from rifled graves to get the nits and bugs out.

In a number of crates, they found even more corpse clothes and funereal fobs. Valuables and trinkets taken from—the Dead!

Jean Baptiste was placed in prison quickly, while a lynch mob formed outside demanding that the grave robbing varlet, “Be hung by his wretched neck until he’s as dead as any he ever robbed!”

“Kill him! String him up by his yellow dog neck!”

“Naw, hangin’s too good for him! He oughter be drawn and quartered!”

“Burn him alive, I say!”

(We’re exercising some literary creativity

here, of course, but you get the picture.)

Others, devout Mormons, were more worried about the state of their relatives bodies at the Resurrection:

“Will those poor people go to meet God in the nude?”

(Brigham Young assured them, most assuredly, THEY WOULD NOT. Moroni Walker could not be reached for comment.)

The police allayed the public fears by putting the massive piles of clothes and jewels into one monstrous crate and burying it in the same cemetery; where, presumably, it would be within easy reach when the Judgment Trump was sounded.

As for Jean Baptiste, he copped to the whole business, and even admitted to selling jewels and baubles of the dead to local thrift stores. It was assumed he robbed, perhaps, 350 graves. Alas, no trial transcript survives.

The authorities were not going to hang a man for merely rifling graves—although, as far as that era went, justice flowed pretty hard and swift, typically. Instead, they branded him with a hot iron (ouch!) and sent him to a nearby island—in exile.

Later, a visitation to the outcast criminal by two watchmen yielded an astonishing find. Mr. Baptiste, it seemed, had flown the coop. Strips of cowhide and planks of wood lead many to believe that the erstwhile grave robber had escaped the weight of his infamy, fleeing into the unknown, seeking a final try at freedom.

(Later, a skeletonized corpse was found at

the mouth of a nearby river, wearing the putative “ball and chain” of legend and lore. Though many claimed these remains to be the corpse of Jean Baptiste, his jailers attested to the fact that, though he was stranded on the island a prisoner, he was in fact NOT wearing any leg manacles at the time. Would have been hard for him to have survived otherwise, no?)

The Great Salt Lake, which is so shallow it reaches to only 27 feet in some spots, is one of the largest and saltiest bodies of water in the world. On its eastern bank, a strange sight has been reported.

A lonely figure, enshrouded in rotting cloth, or clothing, or the cerements of the grave, chained forever, like Marley’s ghost, to the remnants of his earthly sin, is said to trudge the edge of the water, forever living out the purgatorial punishment he brought upon his own head by defiling the graves (and, perhaps the bodies?) of the defenseless dead. He is now one of them—but they could hardly be said to smile about that, all things considered?

Now, can YOU smile at our terrible tale?
Well, CAN YOU?

Appendix G: Classifications of Necrophilia

Two classification systems whereby necrophiles are categorized has been proposed. The first, by Rosman and Resnick,, outlined in their

article "Sexual Attraction to Corpses: A Psychiatric Review of Necrophilia" divides necrophiles into "Genuine Necrophilia" and "Psuedo-Necrophilia", with Genuine Necrophiliac being one who is fixated, primarily, with the idea of sexually abusing a corpse. Psuedo-necrophilia, by contrast, is a paraphilia whereby the perpetrator is not primarily motivated by the idea of possessing a dead body, whether through homicide or access because of being employed in a morgue or mortuary, but will act on the necrophiliac impulse in other ways. A Genuine can be driven enough to kill, whereas the fantasies of a Psuedo may be sated by other means (role-playing, sadism, etc.).

The Genuine Necrophiliac is subdivided into the categories of.

- 1.) Necrophilic homicide: A category that is self-explanatory. perpetrators will literally kill to possess a dead body. These are the Ted Bundys and Jeffrey Dahmers of the world.
- 2.) Regular Necrophilia: These are the common variety, who have sex, opportunistically, with an already dead body.
- 3.) Necrophilic fantasy: A fantasy of performing a sexual act on a corpse is given reality by an opportunity to

do so.

Dr. Anil Aggrawal, in his book *Necrophilia: Forensic and Medico-legal Aspects*, expounds upon the classification system devised by Rosman and Resnick, with a ten category system. It follows:

1.) Role Players: Enjoy acting out necrophiliac fantasies with a living partner. Oftentimes this is in a brothel with a prostitute, or a fetish club.

2.) Romantic Necrophiles: Those that can't "move on" (i.e. Carl Tanzler) after the death of a cherished loved one, so they attempt to preserve the body and relate to their dead in the same way as if they were still alive.

3.) Necrophilic Fantasizers; Meaning exactly what it implies, these people fantasize about sex with a corpse; a fantasy born, perhaps, from their sense of rejection or powerlessness. They may never get beyond the fantasy stage.

4.) Tactile Necrophiles: Corpse molesters, they will try to get a tactile arousal from fondling or stoking some part of a dead body, if

presented with the opportunity. Often they seek out work as morgue attendants, or in the funeral business, so they can have access to dead bodies.

5.) Fetishistic Necrophilias: Victor Ardisson seems to fall into this category: a death-miscreant. Having such a fetish for dead bodies, these necrophiles cut pieces up to preserve in jars, or, like Jean Baptiste, steal the clothing and other articles and accoutrements of the dead as keepsakes.

6.) Necromutilomaniacs: Those that take satisfaction, not in having sex with a corpse, but in mutilating one in a psychopathic frenzy. One could argue that sergeant Bertrand belongs in this category; except, it is known he also derived his sexual gratification with actually penetrating the corpse.

7.) Opportunistic Necrophiles: Rosman and Resnick's "pseudo-Necrophilia," these necrophiles are content to have sex with a living partner, BUT, if the opportunity to do so arises, they will have sex with a corpse. Necrophile morgue

attendant Kenneth Douglas comes to mind.

8.) Regular Necrophiles: These people make a practice of having sex with dead bodies. Routinely. Kenneth Douglas, the necrophiliac mortuary attendant who raped the body of Karen Range (as well as dozens if not hundreds more over a period of time), comes to mind.

9.) Homicidal Necrophiles: Meaning exactly what the name implies. The Ted Bundys and Henry Lee Lucas's, Dahmers and other necro-obsessed serial killers.

10.) Exclusive Necrophiles: The rarest of them all. These people cannot abide sex with the living, seeking to exclusively sleep with corpses. Not, though, perceived as dangerous.

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